

***BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION  
MEETING AGENDA***

***March 11-12, 2025***

***East Helena High School, 227 Academy  
2760 Valley Dr  
East Helena, MT***

# **AGENDA**

# BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING AGENDA

March 11-12, 2025  
East Helena High School, 227 Academy,  
2760 Valley Dr  
East Helena, MT

Tuesday, March 11, 2025  
8:30 AM

## CALL TO ORDER

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Roll Call
- C. Statement of Public Participation
- D. Welcome Visitors

## PUBLIC COMMENT

*This time will be provided for public comment on items not listed on the agenda. This meeting is open to the public both in person and 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. Members of the public who have joined virtually on Zoom may "raise their hand" at the appropriate time to participate after being recognized by the Board Chair. Members of the public who wish to share written public comment with the Board members must submit written public comment to the Executive Director at [bpe@mt.gov](mailto:bpe@mt.gov) no later than two (2) business days before the start of the meeting. Any written public comment received after this deadline will be shared with the Board members after the meeting. All written public comment will be included as part of the official public record.*

*Action may be taken on any item listed on the Board agenda. Per §2-3-103, MCA, the Board encourages public comment on any item prior to Board final action.*

## CONSENT AGENDA – page #8

*(Items may be pulled from Consent Agenda upon request)*

- A. January 23-24, 2025 and January 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes
- B. Financials

## ADOPT AGENDA

### ❖ REPORTS – Dr. Tim Tharp (Items 1-6)

- Item 1                    **CHAIRPERSON REPORT – 15 Minutes, page #144**  
Dr. Tim Tharp
  - Welcome from Superintendent Dan Rispens, East Helena Public Schools
  - Welcome New Board Member
  - Committee Assignments
- Item 2                    **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT – 15 Minutes, page #146**  
McCall Flynn
- Item 3                    **STATE SUPERINTENDENT REPORT – 1 Hour, page #147**  
State Superintendent Susie Hedalen
  - Assessment Update
  - NAEP Overview
  - Federal Report
  - Accreditation Report
  - Content Standards Revision Update
  - Annual School Food Services Report

- Item 4                    **COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT – 15 Minutes, page #209**  
Dr. Angela McLean
- Item 5                    **GOVERNOR’S OFFICE REPORT – 15 Minutes, page #210**  
Dylan Klapmeier
- Item 6                    **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT – 15 Minutes, page #211**  
Gavin Mow
- ❖ **MACIE LIAISON – Julia Maxwell (Item 7)**
- Item 7                    **MACIE REPORT –15 Minutes, page #212**  
Jordann Lankford Forster
- ❖ **CHARTER COMMITTEE – Dr. Ron Slinger (Items 8-10)**
- Item 8                    **UPDATE ON COMMUNITY CHOICE SCHOOL COMMISSION – 15 Minutes, page #214**  
Trish Schreiber
- Item 9                    **ACTION ON THE BOZEMAN SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES’ REQUEST  
FOR DISSOLUTION OF THE BOZEMAN ONLINE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL – 10  
Minutes, page #215**  
Superintendent Casey Bertram, Bozeman School District
- Item 10                   **ACTION ON THE JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF  
TRUSTEES’ REQUEST FOR DISSOLUTION OF THE JEFFERSON ACADEMY  
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL – 10 Minutes, page #221**  
Superintendent Erik Wilkerson, Jefferson County School District
- ❖ **ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – Madalyn Quinlan (Item 11)**
- Item 11                   **JOINT ACCREDITATION PROPOSAL WORK SESSION – 1 Hour, page #225**  
Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI; Crystal Andrews, OPI; Daniel Sybrant, COGNIA
- \*\*\*\*\***LUNCH BREAK**\*\*\*\*\*
- \*\*Lunch will be provided for Board members\*\***
- ❖ **BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION TOURS**
- 1:00 PM                   **EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTION CLASSROOM TOUR**  
Eastgate Elementary School  
4010 Gradestake St, East Helena, MT
- 1:45 PM                   **EAST HELENA 227 ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL TOUR**  
227 Academy, East Valley Middle School  
400 Kalispell Ave N, East Helena, MT
- 2:15 PM                   **EAST HELENA 227 ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL TOUR AND ROUNDTABLE  
DISCUSSION**  
227 Academy, East Helena High School  
2760 Valley Dr, East Helena, MT
- \*\*\*\*\***TIME CERTAIN AT 3:15 PM**\*\*\*\*\*
- ❖ **LICENSURE COMMITTEE – Dr. Ron Slinger (Items 12-13)**
- Item 12                   **ACTION ON INITIAL REVIEW OF BPE CASE #2025-01, REGER – 15 Minutes, page  
#227**  
Aislinn Brown



Item 13                    **ACTION ON CONTESTED CASE HEARING BPE CASE #2024-09, EVANS – 1 Hour,**  
                                 *page #228*  
                                 **Aislinn Brown**

\*\*\*\*\***CLOSED SESSION**\*\*\*\*\*

❖ **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – Dr. Tim Tharp (Items 14-15)**

Item 14                    **DISCUSSION OF YELLOW KIDNEY SETTLEMENT – 30 Minutes, page #229**  
                                 **Aislinn Brown**

\*\*\*\*\***OPEN SESSION**\*\*\*\*\*

Item 15                    **ACTION ON YELLOW KIDNEY SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT – 5 Minutes, page #230**  
                                 **Dr. Tim Tharp**

**Wednesday, March 12, 2025**  
**8:30 AM**

**CALL TO ORDER**

- A.      Pledge of Allegiance**
- B.      Roll Call**
- C.      Statement of Public Participation**
- D.      Welcome Visitors**

❖ **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – Dr. Tim Tharp (Item 16)**

Item 16                    **PRESENTATION ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION – 30 Minutes,**  
                                 *page #232*  
                                 **Dr. Jason Neiffer**

❖ **MSDB LIAISON – Lisa Schmidt (Item 17)**

Item 17                    **MSDB REPORT – 30 Minutes, page #233**  
                                 **Paul Furthmyre**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- **Action on Out of State Travel Request**
- **Action on Personnel Items**
- **Action on 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of MSDB 2025-2026 School Calendar**

❖ **LICENSURE COMMITTEE – Dr. Ron Slinger (Items 18-20)**

Item 18                    **ACTION ON REGENERATED TEST REVIEW AND QUALIFYING SCORES – 15**  
                                 *Minutes, page #261*  
                                 **Crystal Andrews**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- **Social Studies**
- **Family and Consumer Science**
- **Technology Education**

Item 19                    **ACTION ON MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY SPECIAL EDUCATION**  
                                 **CERTIFICATION PROGRAM – 15 Minutes, page #268**  
                                 **Crystal Andrews**

**Item 20**                    **REVIEW DRAFT COUNCIL FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF EDUCATOR  
PREPARATION MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – 15 Minutes, page #272**  
**Crystal Andrews**

❖ **ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – Madalyn Quinlan (Items 21-24)**

**Item 21**                    **ACTION ON THE CORRECTIVE NOTICE OF ADOPTION PERTAINING TO THE  
ADOPTION, AMENDMENT, AND REPEAL OF ARM, TITLE 10, CHAPTER 53,  
MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS, AND AUTHORIZE FILING OF THE NOTICE  
WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE FOR PUBLICATION IN THE  
MONTANA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER – 15 Minutes, page #283**  
**Madalyn Quinlan**

**Item 22**                    **ACTION ON PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION STATUS OPTION FOR PUBLIC  
CHARTER SCHOOLS – 15 Minutes, page #293**  
**Christy Mock-Stutz, Crystal Andrews**

**Item 23**                    **ACTION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCEDURES AND SCHEDULES FOR  
JOINT ACCREDITATION – 15 Minutes, page #307**  
**Dr. Julie Murgel, Crystal Andrews**

**Item 24**                    **ACTION ON THE COGNIA JOINT ACCREDITATION MEMORANDUM OF  
UNDERSTANDING – 15 Minutes, page #313**  
**Madalyn Quinlan**

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS May 15-16, 2025, Great Falls, MT**

Student Representative Last Meeting & Recognition

MACIE Update

Action on K-12 Schools Payment Schedule

Assessment Update

Accreditation Update

Action on CAEP MOU

Federal Update

Content Standards Revision Update

Action on Accreditation Status of All Schools

Executive Director Performance Evaluation

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

*This time will be provided for public comment on items not listed on the agenda. This meeting is open to the public both in person and 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. Members of the public who have joined virtually on Zoom may "raise their hand" at the appropriate time to participate after being recognized by the Board Chair. Members of the public who wish to share written public comment with the Board members must submit written public comment to the Executive Director at [bpe@mt.gov](mailto:bpe@mt.gov) no later than two (2) business days before the start of the meeting. Any written public comment received after this deadline will be shared with the Board members after the meeting. All written public comment will be included as part of the official public record.*

**ADJOURN**

*The Montana Board of Public Education is a Professional Development Unit Provider. Attending a Board of Public Education Meeting either in person or via Zoom may qualify you to receive professional development units. Please complete the necessary information on the sign-in sheet if you are applying for professional development units.*

*Agenda items are handled in the order listed on the approved agenda. Items may be rearranged unless listed "time certain". Public comment is welcome on all items listed as "Action" and as noted at the beginning and end of each meeting.*

*The Board of Public Education will make reasonable accommodations for known disabilities that may interfere with an individual's ability to participate in the meeting. Individuals who require such accommodations should make requests to the Board of Public Education as soon as possible prior to the meeting start date. You may write to: Kris Stockton, PO Box 200601, Helena MT, 59620, email at: [kmstockton@mt.gov](mailto:kmstockton@mt.gov) or phone at 406-444-0302.*

## **CALL TO ORDER**

- A. Pledge of Allegiance**
- B. Roll Call**
- C. Statement of Public Participation**
- D. Welcome Visitors**

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Items may be pulled from Consent Agenda if  
requested

- A. January 23-24, 2025 and January 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes**
- B. Financials**

# **CONSENT AGENDA**

## **MINUTES**

# BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

January 23-24, 2025  
Montana School Boards Association  
863 Great Northern Blvd  
Helena, MT

**Thursday, January 23, 2025**  
**8:30 AM**

## **CALL TO ORDER -00:00:15**

Chair Tharp called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. The Chair led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and Ms. Kris Stockton took Roll Call. The Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests. Guests in the audience introduced themselves to the Board.

Board members: Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair; Dr. Ron Slinger, Vice Chair; Ms. Renee Rasmussen; Ms. Madalyn Quinlan; Ms. Jane Hamman; Ms. Lisa Schmidt; Ms. Julia Maxwell; Mr. Gavin Mow, Student Representative. Ex Officio members: Dr. Angela McLean, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE); State Superintendent Susie Hedalen, Office of Public Instruction (OPI); Mr. Dylan Klapmeier, Governor's Office. Staff: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Ms. Julie Balsam, Accounting Technician; Ms. Jenny Murnane Butcher, Program Officer. Guests: Superintendent Paul Furthmyre, Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB); Ms. Cedar Rose, OPI; Ms. Crystal Andrews, OPI; Ms. Marie Judisch, OPI; Ms. Carrie Kouba, OPI; Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI; Ms. Aislinn Brown, Board Legal Counsel; Mr. Brenton Craggs, Attorney, OPI; Ms. Trish Schreiber, Chair, Community Choice Schools Commission; Ms. Tyler Capece, OPI; Ms. Donell Rosenthal, OPI; Superintendent Chad Johnson, Livingston Public Schools (LPS); Superintendent Dan McGee, Liberty Elementary School District (LESD); Mr. David Hofer, Chair, Liberty Elementary School Board; Mr. Paul Wipf, Spokesperson, Liberty Elementary Public Charter School; Mr. Todd Hanson, 4 Poles Consulting; Ms. Emily Post, Livingston; Mr. Todd Wester, Curriculum Director, LPS; Ms. Ann Penn Cox, Director of Literacy Programs, LPS; Ms. Melissa Byington, Laurel Public Schools (Laurel PS); Mr. Lance Melton, Executive Director, Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA); Ms. Charla Wetsch, Curriculum Director, Laurel PS; Superintendent Matt Torix, Laurel PS; Dr. Lauren Davis, Montana State University (MSU); Dr. Leslie Rogers, MSU; Mr. Brad Moore, Lewistown Public Schools; Mr. Jason Sargent; Ms. Sandra Beal.

**PUBLIC COMMENT – 00:02:26**  
No public comment.

**CONSENT AGENDA – 00:02:39**

**Board member Hamman moved to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**ADOPT AGENDA – 00:03:00**

**Board member Quinlan moved to adopt the Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

\*\*\*\*\****Items are listed in the order in which they are presented***\*\*\*\*\*

❖ **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – Dr. Tim Tharp (Item 1)**

**Item 1** **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR – 00:03:17**  
**McCall Flynn**

Ms. McCall Flynn noted the open position of Vice Chair and called for nominations.

**Board member Rasmussen nominated Dr. Ron Slinger. No other nominations were made.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**❖ REPORTS – Dr. Tim Tharp (Items 2-6)**

**Item 2** **CHAIRPERSON REPORT – 00:04:21**  
**Dr. Tim Tharp**

Chair Tharp reviewed meetings he has attended on behalf of the Board since the November meeting which include the Board's Special Meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup>, and the MSDB Christmas program. Chair Tharp announced his appointments to national committees, trainings he has given and that are upcoming for Mental Health training and welcomed Ms. Julia Maxwell to the Board.

**Item 3** **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT – 00:08:16**  
**McCall Flynn**

Ms. McCall Flynn thanked MTSBA staff for allowing the Board to use their facilities for the meeting. Ms. Flynn gave an update on Legislative bills pertaining to the Board and detailed activities she has participated in related to the 2025 Legislative Session, and reviewed the agency bill Representative Bedey is carrying on behalf of the Board. Ms. Flynn updated the Board on work staff has completed since the November meeting and noted two reports that are scheduled to be presented annually at the January meeting, but no data is yet available to report. Those reports include the Community Choice Schools Annual Report and the Early Literacy Screening Tools Report. Ms. Flynn discussed work the Board and OPI have been engaged in related to the Fall Data report for the Public Charter Schools.

**Item 4** **STATE SUPERINTENDENT REPORT – 00:17:42**  
**State Superintendent Susie Hedalen**

Superintendent Hedalen introduced members of her Executive Team and gave an overview of funding requests the OPI has presented to the Legislature which include funding for a third year of math, additional FTE for improved customer service, and funding for the ACT as the high school assessment tool. OPI staff members presented the following reports:

Transportation Report: Ms. Donell Rosenthal updated the Board with Fiscal Year 2024 data related to Pupil Transportation in Montana and discussed details from the report which included the number of certified bus drivers, routes, riders, and miles transported. Also reviewed were the number of contracts to both and parents. Ms. Rosenthal and Superintendent Hedalen answered Board members' questions regarding bus driver shortages.

Assessment Report: Ms. Cedar Rose provided an update on the results of the first MAST testing window and the status of the second MAST testing window currently in progress, challenges and successes schools have reported, and percentages of tests administered. Ms. Rose answered Board members' questions.

Federal Report: Ms. Carrie Kouba updated the Board on the High Risk Designation Timeline and the status of schools that receive Title 1 Part A, Part C, Part D, Part 3, Part 4, and Part 9 funds, the purpose of the funds, and how the distribution of funds are monitored by the OPI. Ms. Kouba and Superintendent Hedalen answered Board members' questions.

Accreditation Report: Ms. Crystal Andrews presented an update of the Accreditation Platform that opened December 2, 2024, and reported that 100% of schools have been contacted to ensure that all districts were able to successfully access the system. The next platform for Infinite Campus opens on February 3, 2025 for schools to add additional information or make corrections. Five schools have completed all aspects and the OPI has received positive feedback about the Accreditation Data Collection process for the 2024-2025 school year. Ms. Andrews reviewed training sessions the OPI has offered to districts related to the new Accreditation reporting process and answered Board members' questions. Vice Chair Slinger complimented Ms. Andrews and the OPI on their work with the new system and for their response to suggestions from the field.

Content Standards Revision Update: Ms. Marie Judisch discussed the status of the Content Standards Revisions underway and work both the Task Force and Negotiated Rulemaking Committee have completed as the revisions move through the process.

Superintendent Hedalen congratulated Board member Slinger on his nomination as Vice Chair and noted the OPI will look into questions Board members have and bring information back at a future meeting.

**Item 5 GOVERNOR'S OFFICE REPORT – 01:39:48**

**Dylan Klapmeier**

Mr. Dylan Klapmeier welcomed Board member Maxwell to her first Board meeting and to Ms. Hannah Nieskens who will be at the March meeting. Mr. Klapmeier gave an overview of each of their backgrounds and announced the Governor's appointment of Superintendent Heather Hoyer from Great Falls Public Schools to the Board of Regents. Mr. Klapmeier highlighted education bills the Governor's Office is tracking in the Legislature, the Governor's Office support of Board member appointments that will be before the Senate for approval, and reviewed a letter from the Governor to the Board related to Public Charter Schools.

**Item 6 COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT – 01:56:44**

**Dr. Angela McLean**

Dr. McLean welcomed Board member Maxwell to the Board, congratulated newly appointed Vice Chair Slinger, and thanked Board member Hamman for her contributions to the Board during her tenure. Dr. McLean noted the request from the Superintendent for additional funding to support a third year of math, reviewed the upcoming Section E hearings related to OCHE and the Montana University System, thanked all the Educator Preparation Programs across the state for their innovative work, and for the work of mental health programs on campuses. Dr. McLean encouraged all educators and parents to remind families of high school seniors to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

**❖ CHARTER COMMITTEE – Jane Hamman (Items 7-8)**

**Item 7 UPDATE ON COMMUNITY CHOICE SCHOOL COMMISSION – 02:02:01**

**Trish Schreiber**

Ms. Trish Schreiber reviewed the December Commission meeting and announced that the Vice Chair and Treasurer of the Executive Committee will remain the same. Chair Schreiber noted the Commission held a Special meeting and approved a new position for a Director of Planning for the Commission and that the hiring process is currently underway. The Chair noted that oral arguments in the litigation has been delayed until February 28, 2025.

**Item 8 WORK SESSION ON THE APPROVAL AND DENIAL OF PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS – 02:06:13**

**Jane Hamman**

Chair Tharp reviewed the process for the work session and noted that he will allow for public comment before the work session begins.

Superintendent Dan McGee provided public comment on the application from Liberty Elementary for a Public Charter School.

Mr. David Hofer provided public comment on the application from Liberty Elementary for a Public Charter School.

Mr. Paul Wipf provided public comment on the application from Liberty Elementary for a Public Charter School. Mr. Todd Hanson provided public comment on the application from Liberty Elementary for a Public Charter School.

Ms. Emily Post provided public comment on the application from Yellowstone Experience School (YES) for a Public Charter School.

Superintendent Johnson provided public comment on the application from YES for a Public Charter School.

Mr. Todd Wester provided public comment on the application from YES for a Public Charter School.

Ms. Ann Penn Cox provided public comment on the application from YES for a Public Charter School.



Ms. Melissa Byington provided public comment on the application from Laurel Virtual Academy for a Public Charter School.

Mr. Lance Melton gave public comment regarding HB 549(2023) and aspects of the law pertaining to the Public Charter School Act and reviewed the requirements in the law stating schools must comply with Title 20.

Ms. Charla Wetsch provided public comment on the application from Laurel Virtual Academy for a Public Charter School.

Superintendent Torix provided public comment on the application from Laurel Virtual Academy for a Public Charter School.

Board Charter School Committee Chair Hamman stated the Board's appreciation of the written public comment received over the past weeks and for those giving comment in person at the meeting. Board Charter Committee Chair Hamman noted that Board members have reviewed and scored each application according to the rubric, and Ms. Flynn reviewed the process for the work session and what the Board will act on the following day. Members discussed the applications, where they score on the rubric, and if the applications have met the letter of the law and the intent of the Public Charter School Act.

❖ **LICENSURE COMMITTEE – Jane Hamman (Items 9-13)**

**Item 9 INFORMATION ON PRAXIS REGENERATED TEST REVIEW AND QUALIFYING SCORES FOR SOCIAL STUDIES, INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY, AND FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE – 04:39:28**  
**Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Crystal Andrews reviewed the Praxis tests for Social Studies, Industrial Technology, and Family and Consumer Science, which are set to expire, and reviewed the new tests that will replace them. Ms. Andrews highlighted what changed in the test, the review conducted by Educational Testing Services (ETS), and each test's recommended qualifying score. Ms. Andrews noted that the Praxis Review Panel agreed with the scores recommended by ETS with the exception of the score for Industrial Technology, and the panel has selected a different score for Industrial Technology. Ms. Andrews noted that each recommendation has been sent to the Montana Council of Deans of Education for review and those recommendations will be brought to the Board at the March 2025 meeting. Ms. Andrews answered Board members' questions.

**Item 10 INFORMATION ON ANNUAL EDUCATOR LICENSURE REPORT – 04:49:50**  
**Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Andrews reviewed the Annual Educator Licensure Report for the Board, reviewed changes in the report from last year, and answered Board members' questions.

**Item 11 INFORMATION ON MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY SPECIAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION PROGRAM – 05:03:16**  
**Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Crystal Andrews presented a request from MSU for the addition of a Special Education Certification Program in their Educator Preparation Program. Dr. Lauren Davis and Dr. Leslie Rogers presented the details of the new certificate program and answered Board members' questions.

**Item 12 PRESENTATION ON ABCTE INTERIM REPORT FOR ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIALING – 05:13:22**  
**Isabell Welch, ABCTE and Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Isabell Welch presented a report to the Board which reviewed enrollment in the Montana ABCTe Teacher Education program. The report highlighted the endorsement areas where individuals have obtained certification, districts where teachers are employed, the results of a satisfaction survey completed by students and employers, and areas ABCTe has slated for improvement. Ms. Welch answered Board members' questions.

**Item 13 INFORMATION ON THE QUALITY EDUCATOR LOAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM – 05:34:43**  
**Dr. Julie Murgel**

Dr. Julie Murgel reviewed the statute for the Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program and discussed the qualifications educators must meet to qualify for the payment and the amount educators may receive. Dr. Murgel

noted the next application cycle will open February 5, 2025, and continue through April 15, 2025, reviewed the number of payments sent out in previous years, and noted that OPI hopes to improve communication to educators and districts in an effort to increase the number of payments. Dr. Murgel answered Board members' questions.

❖ **ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – Madalyn Quinlan (Items 14-15)**

**Item 14**                    **ACTION ON THE NOTICE OF ADOPTION PERTAINING TO THE ADOPTION, AMENDMENT, AND REPEAL OF ARM, TITLE 10, CHAPTER 53, MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS, AND AUTHORIZE FILING OF THE NOTICE WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE FOR PUBLICATION IN THE MONTANA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER – 05:43:28**  
**Madalyn Quinlan**

Ms. Flynn reviewed the new Administrative Rules format due to the conversion to a new system at the Secretary of State's Office. The new format pertains to Items 14 and 15.

Board member Quinlan noted that no comments were received during the public comment period.

**Board member Quinlan moved to approve the Notice of Adoption, Amendment, and Repeal of ARM Title 10, Chapter 53, Mathematics Content Standards, and authorize filing of the notice with the Secretary of State's Office for publication in the Montana Administrative Register. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**Item 15**                    **ACTION ON THE NOTICE OF ADOPTION PERTAINING TO THE ADOPTION AND REPEAL OF ARM, TITLE 10, CHAPTER 54, WORLD LANGUAGE CONTENT STANDARDS, AND AUTHORIZE FILING OF THE NOTICE WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE FOR PUBLICATION IN THE MONTANA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER – 05:49:29**  
**Madalyn Quinlan**

Board member Quinlan noted that no comments were received during the public comment period.

**Board member Quinlan moved to approve the Notice of Adoption and Repeal of ARM Title 10, Chapter 54, World Language Content Standards, and authorize filing of the notice with the Secretary of State's Office for publication in the Montana Administrative Register. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

Ms. Flynn noted that the World Language Content Standards have been moved from Chapter 54 to Chapter 53.

❖ **LICENSURE COMMITTEE – Jane Hamman (Item 16)**

**Item 16**                    **ACTION ON CONTESTED CASE HEARING BPE CASE #2024-10, MAHERAS – 06:14:39**  
**Aislinn Brown**

Ms. Aislinn Brown opened the item and turned it over to Mr. Brenton Craggs. Mr. Craggs announced that a stipulated agreement has been reached between the parties. Ms. Bea Kaleva, Attorney for Mr. Maheras, noted that Mr. Maheras has completed the requirements of his sentence, the charges have been dropped from his record, and he will accept the letter of reprimand agreed to in the stipulated agreement. Board members asked questions of Ms. Kaleva.

**Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the stipulated agreement between the parties in BPE Case #2024-10, Maheras. Motion seconded by Board member Hamman.**

***No discussion. Motion passed with Board member Rasmussen dissenting.***

❖ **MSDB LIAISON – Lisa Schmidt (Item 18)**

**Item 18**                                **MSDB REPORT – 06:22:52**  
**Paul Furthmyre**

Superintendent Furthmyre reviewed the action items on the agenda, updated the Board on the status of MSDB Legislative requests, and answered Board members' questions.

**Board member Schmidt moved to approve the MSDB Personnel Action Items as listed in the agenda packet. Motion seconded by Board member Hamman.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**Board member Schmidt moved to approve the MSDB Out of State Travel Requests as listed in the agenda packet. Motion seconded by Board member Quinlan.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**Board member Schmidt moved to approve the Second Reading of MSDB Policies as listed in the agenda packet. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.**

***No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

❖ **REPORTS – Dr. Tim Tharp (Item 17)**

**Item 17**                                **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT – 06:46:49**  
**Gavin Mow**

Mr. Gavin Mow updated the Board on his participation in the National Association of State Boards of Education Student Council and noted that the results of the Student Survey Report are not available yet due to the high number of responses received, but he will provide results at the March meeting. Mr. Mow discussed the process for the selection of the next Student Representative to the Board and answered Board members' questions.

The Chair called for Executive Session and the Board entered Closed Session at 3:20 PM for the MSDB Superintendent Evaluation.

❖ **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – Dr. Tim Tharp (Item 19)**

**Item 19**                                **MSDB SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION – 06:51:02**  
**Dr. Tim Tharp**

The Board came back to Open Session at 3:43 PM.

**RECESS**

The Board recessed for the day at 3:44 PM.

**Friday, January 24, 2025**

**8:30 AM**

**CALL TO ORDER – 00:00:12**

Chair Tharp called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. The Chair led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and Ms. Kris Stockton took Roll Call. The Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests. Deputy Superintendent Ron Whitmoyer, OPI, introduced himself to the Board.

Board members: Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair; Dr. Ron Slinger, Vice Chair; Ms. Renee Rasmussen; Ms. Madalyn Quinlan; Ms. Jane Hamman; Ms. Lisa Schmidt; Ms. Julia Maxwell. Ex Officio members: Dr. Angela McLean, OCHE; Deputy State Superintendent Ron Whitmoyer, OPI; Mr. Dylan Klapmeier, Governor's Office. Staff: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Ms. Julie Balsam, Accounting Technician; Ms. Jenny Murnane Butcher, Program Officer. Guests: Superintendent Paul Furthmyre, MSDB; Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI; Ms. Krystal Smith, OPI; Ms. Jordann Lankford Forster, Chair, Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education (MACIE); Ms. April Grady, OPI; Mr. Todd Hanson, 4 Poles Consulting; Superintendent McGee,

\*\*\*\*\**Items are listed in the order in which they are presented*\*\*\*\*\*

❖ **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – Dr. Tim Tharp (Items 20-22)**

**Item 20                      ACTION ON MSDB SUPERINTENDENT 2024-2025 – 00:03:49**  
**Dr. Tim Tharp**

**Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Superintendent Contract. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.**

***Superintendent Furthmyre thanked the Board for their support and stated he looks forward to continuing in his role at the MSDB.***

***Chair Tharp noted that an evaluation was held the previous day and that pending legislation, an amendment to the contract for the salary may need to be made in the future.***

***No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**Item 21                      ACTION ON TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING GRANTS – 00:06:37**  
**Krystal Smith**

Ms. Krystal Smith presented the Transformational Learning Grant applications and shared that the most recent application window closed January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Ms. Smith reviewed the qualifications for the grant and the applications received before answering Board members' questions.

**Vice Chair Slinger moved to qualify the Transformational Learning Grant Applications as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

Ms. Smith presented the Annual Reports for the Transformational Learning Grant program and answered Board members' questions.

**Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the Transformational Learning Grant Annual Reports as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**Item 22                      ACTION ON ADVANCED OPPORTUNITY GRANTS - 00:17:42**  
**Krystal Smith**

Ms. Krystal Smith reviewed the purpose of and qualifications for the Advanced Opportunity Grant program before reviewing the applications received.

**Vice Chair Slinger moved to qualify the Advanced Opportunity Grant applications as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

Ms. Smith presented the Annual Reports for the Advanced Opportunity Grant program.

**Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the Advanced Opportunity Grant Annual Reports as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Hamman.**

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

❖ **MACIE LIAISON – Dr. Tim Tharp (Items 23-24)**

**Item 24 INFORMATION ON GOVERNOR'S BUDGET REQUEST – 00:39:58**

**April Grady**

Ms. April Grady reviewed the Present Law Adjustment package requested by OPI for operations related to MACIE and noted the request has been increased from the original proposal in the Governor's budget. Mr. Klapmeier noted the request is supported by the Governor's Office, and Ms. McCall Flynn noted that the funding will exist within the OPI budget if approved. Vice Chair Slinger stated his support of this request. Ms. Grady stated that OPI has presented the request to the Section E Committee, but the Committee has not acted.

**Item 23 MACIE REPORT – 00:43:21**

**Jordann Lankford Forster**

Ms. Jordann Lankford Forster reviewed recent activities and meetings that MACIE has taken part in which included a meeting she attended with the ACLU regarding the Yellow Kidney lawsuit where the role of MACIE in Indian Education for All was explained. Ms. Forster noted she has submitted the most recent version of the MACIE Goals, which has been updated on the Board website, and stated she hopes to continue the conversation with the Superintendent with regards to the MACIE funding structure. Ms. Forster answered Board members' questions.

**❖ CHARTER COMMITTEE – Jane Hamman (Item 25)**

**Item 25 ACTION ON THE RESOLUTIONS TO APPROVE AND DENY PUBLIC CHARTER**

**SCHOOLS – 01:03:47**

**Jane Hamman**

Chair Tharp noted that an hour has been designated for this item and that he will continue the discussion from the previous day regarding the application for the Liberty Charter School.

**Vice Chair Slinger moved to deny the Liberty Charter Application.**

**Board member Hamman made a substitute motion to support the Liberty Charter Application and hold a Special Meeting to discuss requesting an Attorney General Opinion. Vice Chair Slinger did not accept the substitute motion.**

**Board member Rasmussen made a substitute motion to accept the chart as presented with the blue to approve and the remainder to disapprove. Substitute motion accepted by Vice Chair Slinger. Motion seconded by Board member Maxwell.**

***Ms. Flynn noted that the resolutions are written and must be approved in an open meeting.***

***Board member Rasmussen withdrew her substitute motion.***

Ms. Flynn displayed the Resolution to Approve for the Board and read the Resolution for the record.

**Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the Resolution to Approve the five Public Charter School Applications. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.**

***Public comment from Mr. Todd Hanson regarding the Board's statutory responsibilities in the Public Charter School Act and clarified components of the Liberty Charter School Application.***

***No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

Ms. Flynn displayed the Resolution to Deny for the Board and read the Resolution for the record.

**Board member Quinlan moved to approve the Resolution to Deny. Motion seconded by Vice Chair Slinger.**

***Board member Maxwell stated her reasons for voting to approve the Resolution to Deny.***

***No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

After a review of Board member availability, the Chair stated that the Special Meeting would be scheduled for Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 11:00 AM. Members discussed possible changes to the Public Charter School Act and the role of the Board.

**Item 26**                      **RECOGNITION OF EXITING BOARD MEMBER – 01:45:38**  
**Dr. Tim Tharp**

Ms. Flynn reviewed the March meeting which will be held on Tuesday March 11 and Wednesday March 12, 2025, in East Helena.

MACIE Update  
Action on MSDB School Calendar  
Action on Early Literacy Screening Tools (Odd Years)  
*Assessment Update*  
*Federal Update*  
*Accreditation Report*  
*Annual School Food Services Report*  
*Review Draft CAEP MOU*  
*Content Standards Revision Update*

No public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 10:27 AM.

*Agenda items are handled in the order listed on the approved agenda. Items may be rearranged unless listed "time certain". Public comment is welcome on all items listed as "Action" and as noted at the beginning and end of each meeting.*

*The Board of Public Education will make reasonable accommodations for known disabilities that may interfere with an individual's ability to participate in the meeting. Individuals who require such accommodations should make requests to the Board of Public Education as soon as possible prior to the meeting start date. You may write to: Kris Stockton, PO Box 200601, Helena MT. 59620, email at: [kmstockton@mt.gov](mailto:kmstockton@mt.gov) or phone at 406-444-0302.*



**Public Comment**  
**Public Charter School Applications**

**Laurel Virtual Academy**

**1. Linda Risdon**

As a special education aide, I see the apathy in our schools, and many behavior issues as well. This is in the general education students, and not so much in our SpEd kids. There is a lack of parental involvement with those students, which just carries through to their lack of interest. These observances are noted daily. If the Charter School can help with that, I believe it would be a good option.

**2. Rhonda Rosencranz**

I strongly support the Laurel Public Schools application to become a charter school. We were part of a Charter school in UT. Both my child and I felt like it was a wonderful learning environment.

**3. Joe Holzwarth**  
**Laurel, MT**

I am writing to you to express my opposition (at the current moment) to the Laurel Virtual Academy Charter School. I believe that technology has changed the way we need to evaluate teaching and how some kids can flourish in an online environment, but I believe there is some confusion as to how the charter school will operate. I have compiled a list of questions/concerns that I have had a hard time finding an answer for:

- Will the charter school operate outside of the local school district and local school board? If so, I am fully against the charter school. I do not believe we need a separate school outside of the school district and that the online component should be operated within the district and follow the same criteria for success as our local schools.
- What is the criteria for both students and educators that will be hired to administer the online academy? Before I can support a charter school, the criteria for success needs to be evaluated. Hiring teachers that do not meet the current standards and requirements that in person teachers are required to have would be detrimental to the potential success of online students - their standard for a thorough education should be the same.
- The information gathered currently states that if successful, the charter school will be funded with a \$400,000 grant. Is this a one time grant? Is it a yearly grant? Does the district need to reapply yearly or bi-annually to ensure funding? What grant program are the funds being pulled from? A mix of federal and state funding? Would it be taking a portion of local levies and applying it to the online academy? What happens if the grant is no longer available? If that funding isn't coming from a long term source, what is the long term plan to keep the charter school operational? Will funds be pulled from other areas within the county/district to cover the deficit? I would hate for the academy to get operational and have funding removed and collapse due to no long term objectives being established and shared with the community.

While I commend the idea of developing strategies to embrace technology and build programs to help more students succeed in getting a formal education that cannot attend in a traditional/public setting, until more information is disseminated to the public to review, I cannot support the Laurel Virtual Academy at this time. I also thoroughly believe that this should not be a separate entity, but should be a part of our local school district (that may be the case, but the information has been lacking and it has sounded like this is a separate entity outside the district). We have the opportunity to develop a hybrid program within our local school district to allow kids to succeed in every situation. As a citizen of Laurel with children in the school

district, I believe that building this hybrid is important, but it should be developed within the operation of the current school district and following their policies and procedures to ensure high levels of education. However, there is a lot of missing information and uncertainties with the current proposed iteration that I cannot support.

I firmly believe that the community of laurel does not need a separate charter school that operates separately from our local school district to meet these goals and objectives and the virtual portion should be incorporated into the local school district.

Thank you for your time and your ability to look at developing new ways to reach kids and build their education - it's a commendable feat.. I look forward to learning more about this proposal and project. If there needs to be any more clarification on my end, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at the below contact information.

#### **4. Ryane Holzwarth Laurel, MT**

I am writing this email to express my concerns with the online Charter School being proposed for Laurel School District. I am opposing my views at this time due to lack of information in regards to how Laurel is going to sustain the program. I also have the following questions:

1. Even though I recognize the need for online teaching for students who are struggling in a classroom setting, has a study been conducted to see how many students this will benefit? How has the school assisted these students in a classroom setting and have there been documentation presented to the parents? Is the decision being based on student's testimony alone?
2. Is this opportunity being presented because of the decline in interest in the Public Education system due to lack of resources and funding for qualified teachers? Who is going to be the oversight into the Charter School? Is the school curriculum going to be in alignment with Laurel Public School? If not, what difference will this be compared to online home schools that are already in place?
3. What is the long-term plan for funding with this Charter School if the grant funds no longer apply? How will this look with the tax payers? Will it be presented in another Mill Levy? Will this take away from Public School funding where funding is already spread thin? How is the public going to stay informed if this passes?

Thank you for taking the time to look into my concerns. As much as I am so appreciative of the concerns for all students and innovative ways to assist students in reaching their full potential in the education system, I do feel that more studies and a firm plan needs to be established within our local Public Schools before outside resources are looked into. The public has the right to know the differences between Charter schools and Publicly funded schools and I would like to see the comparisons of successes and failures other states have seen with online Charter school models. If the board can present resources to the public prior to a final decision along with another public comment after materials have been presented so that the public has been better informed.

#### **Libby Central Charter School**

##### **1. Diane Rewerts**

I am writing to wholeheartedly express strong support for Libby School District's Charter School application. Libby School District works diligently to meet the needs of students and will enhance student



learning and allow for more flexibility in designing programs that reach our most vulnerable students. Libby Schools continually work to be accountable to the public and strive for continuous improvement

### **Liberty Elementary Charter School**

**1. Sheri Larson  
Helena, MT**

I urge you to follow the public charter school evaluation criteria and listen to your counsel to deny the application for the Liberty Academy Charter School. There is no reason to approve if the school does not pass muster. Any areas of concern can be addressed and Liberty Academy should apply when ready to do the important job of educating Montana's youth.

You are doing good work, and I thank you for it.

### **Montana Connections Academy**

**1. Diane Rewerts**

I am writing in strong opposition to consideration of funding for a for profit charter school. Public dollars should be used for public schools and should not go to an out of state for profit entity.

### **Yellowstone Experience School (YES)**

**1. Meghaan Bauer  
Livingston, MT**

I am writing in support of the Yellowstone Experience School's charter application. Our community is in dire need of options for students outside of the traditional classroom model or parochial school, as not all students excel in either of the aforementioned environments.

As a prior local School Board member & parent, I do not feel that the presence of a charter school detracts from our existing public schools but, rather, provides students with the opportunity to attend the school that best aligns with their needs.

Our teachers work hard to provide students with every available opportunity, and I feel that we can best support them by ensuring that their classroom is filled with students who benefit most from the teaching style being offered. I have no prior affiliation with YES, but I ask that you consider approving their application.

**2. Veronica Collins  
Livingston, MT**

I wanted to voice my support for the new charter school. I've struggled with the public school system in Livingston for years for my child with an IEP and would love to have other high school options. I think there are many families in the community that would like alternatives to the public school option based on conversations I'm having throughout the community. We are currently homeschooling for a couple of classes for one of our kids (the other is in full time attendance at the high school) and I feel that at some point out of a lack of options and decent support for our daughter's learning disability, that we may go to full time homeschooling. It would be much better for us to have another option in the creation of this charter school.

**3. Emily Jones**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a Livingston resident in full support of our existing public schools. I have three children who are almost through the school system, and it has been everything they put into it. It has been a great experience.

I believe Livingston has been a strong community because we share the schools and other great organizations and institutions. I would love to see the creativity and energy of Yellowstone Experience School support our whole district and everyone in it. Add those resources to our schools instead of separating them and taking away from our schools. Schools can be, rightfully, slow to change, and most parents have ideas about new or different ways of approaching education. That can feel less than perfect, and we all want perfect for our children. Still, I think fracturing into different schools instead of working together may weaken all schools and leave some kids behind. Our schools have budget and staff issues already. How can we support another?

**4. Janet Lidow**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am writing to express my **strong opposition** to the proposed charter school, Yellowstone Experience School, in Park County. I am a resident of Livingston, MT within the Livingston Public School District boundary. The Livingston Public Schools offer solid educational experiences and many unique opportunities for their students (e.g., Farm to School and CSC programs). I have worked closely with the middle and high schools for the past 4 years through my nonprofit's mental health program. I have been consistently impressed with the resources and supports LPS offer their students. It would be a big mistake to create a charter school when excellent options are already available. As a taxpayer, I want to ensure that my taxes support high quality education for the children in my community. That already exists. I do not think a charter school is needed in Park County. It will result in costing the local taxpayers more money and result in poorer educational outcomes for students. Please do NOT approve the Yellowstone Experience School.

In general, I am opposed to charter schools because they do not have to meet the same standards that public schools. This is a disservice to children. Additionally, school districts in Montana are largely very small and have difficulty finding sufficient staff, particularly in rural regions. Adding charter schools will only increase the current qualified teacher shortage and fragment communities rather than improve the education and opportunities available to children.

**5. Satoshi Yamamoto**  
**Livingston, MT**

I'd like to state my opinion regarding the possibility of building a charter school within Livingston School District as a parent and a school employee.

I personally see the point of building or organizing another school. It was only last year, 2023, that Washington School was closed down due to the financial reasons and the ever decreasing student enrollment.

So why would anyone consider having another school in Livingston?? Totally nonsense.

Another factor is that, due to ever increasing personal living costs - mostly renting a place to live in Montana, the school district has been having hard times to find and recruit teachers and staff.

I also know that the Livingston school district is hiring people every so often. Every now and then there is a shortage of bus drivers and there are many students/parents who can't sign them up.

So, if the city or the state has some funds to build and organize a new school, why wouldn't they apply those funds to the already-existing school to improve equipment and facilities and to hire enough employees?? Please discuss and come up with what is right for current students, parents, and employees.

**6. Ahnnika Herne  
Livingston, MT**

I have a 9-year-old son in the public school system here in Livingston. I heard about this new school and was excited because I feel it is amazing. My son has had several issues since starting public school. He went to a Montessori school when he was younger, and we never had any problems. I feel the classrooms in public school are too large, there is not enough hands-on learning, and they are just not a good fit for us. However, we cannot afford private schools. I think this school would greatly help him overcome the horrible anxiety he experiences daily on the ride to school. I also think this school would reduce the bullying. Honestly, I would feel safer and better sending my son to Yes than to the other schools here. This school can do many great things for the community. I also like the real life curriculum, as an adult now I don't use have the stuff they teach in school.

**7. Yvonne Brutger  
Livingston, MT**

I am writing to ask that The Board NOT approve the application for the Yellowstone Experience School in Livingston MT. I reside in the school district and I am the founder and current Board Member of the Community School Collaborative (CSC), a nonprofit that has an Interagency Agreement with the Livingston School District. CSC provides innovative career exploration education at Sleeping Giant Middle School. In this capacity I have worked extensively with the school administration and students and have seen the work that is being done to address the educational needs of all students. I believe approving a charter school in Livingston will siphon off students from the current district schools, decrease funds available and undermine the education of the students that attend those schools. The money that would be needed to establish and support the YES Charter School would be better used by the Livingston School District to improve and expand their educational programming. I also have a concern that students with significant behavioral issues or educational challenges will not be accepted at the YES.

**8. Joel Mowrey  
Livingston, MT**

I am writing in regards to the proposed charter school in Livingston (Yellowstone Experience School - YES).

My quick response to YES is NO!

Livingston Public Schools are already underfunded and cannot afford to have any existing funds shifted to another school of questionable value and quality. In my estimation, both the public schools and the charter school will mutually suffer the same fate and consequences: neither of them will have adequate funding to provide a quality education.

According to 20-6-805, MCA, "only approve charters whose promise of improved educational outcomes outweighs potential increased costs to state and local taxpayer."

In the Livingston School district, we already have the foundation of a quality education but are severely limited by the lack of funding to enrich the experiences of all students. "Promises of improved educational outcomes" are just that - promises.

As a local citizen of Livingston and one who volunteers at the Sleeping Giant Middle School, I do not support the splitting of my tax dollars for a private school that does not currently exist and that appears to only enrich the pockets of the people forming the school. Why don't those individuals work with the local school and state government to pull all of our time and financial resources to support one school - the Livingston public school. Again, I strongly vote NO on the charter school!

## **9. David and Alicia Herman Livingston, MT**

I am writing to express my strong support for establishing a public charter school in Livingston, Montana. The current state of education within our school district, particularly at the middle school level, is deeply concerning and fails to meet the basic educational needs of our children.

The middle school has not met minimum accreditation standards for years, leaving students without consistent access to essential grade-level content. For instance, there is no yearlong science or history curriculum in place. My children, along with many others, have not had access to grade-level science instruction in two years.

Currently, when teachers are absent, there are no substitutes available, and students are placed in the cafeteria under the supervision of office staff via security cameras. There is not even an adult present, let alone being provided any sort of meaningful instruction. Additionally, students are given an hour of "advisory" daily, which often amounts to little more than homework club, playing games on chromebooks or silent reading. This approach does not offer the structured, grade-level learning opportunities our students need to succeed.

It is not surprising that our county now has more students being homeschooled or enrolled in private schools than attending public schools. This trend is a direct reflection of the district's inability to provide a robust and effective education. Low academic standards, frequent teacher resignations, behavioral disruptions, and a lack of enrichment opportunities have left families with few viable options.

While there has been some improvement in addressing behavioral issues with new administration at the middle school, the educational deficits remain staggering. Students who need advanced learning opportunities or those seeking to meet or exceed grade-level standards are particularly underserved.

Parents and students deserve a choice. A public charter school could provide the structured, rigorous, and innovative education that so many families in our community are seeking. It would offer an alternative for families who have lost confidence in the current system and could serve as a catalyst for improving public education standards across our county.

However, I must express a concern about oversight. Livingston Schools have consistently failed to meet minimum accreditation standards, and the local school board appears unaware of its supervisory responsibilities. Additionally, the board lacks educational professionals among its members. Entrusting

charter and public school oversight to local boards in Montana has exacerbated inequities in education quality across communities. There appears to be insufficient oversight from the Board of Public Education (BPE) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), which further compounds these issues.

We urge the Board to consider the establishment of a public charter school in Livingston. Our children deserve access to quality education that meets minimum accreditation standards, provides opportunities to engage with grade-level content and high-quality instruction, and prepares them for academic and future success.

**10. Molly O'Neil**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a resident within the Livingston Public School District. Please do NOT allow the charter school.

**11. Cheyenne and Joseph Mikkelsen**  
**Livingston, MT**

My husband, Joseph, and I have two young daughters and live in Livingston, MT. I am writing to you to show our support of the Yellowstone Experience School. We are very excited and passionate about the prospect of this school coming to life. Livingston needs this for its current residents and for the growing population of our town. Our daughters would be students there, and I, personally, would love to be involved in this type of educational system. Thank you very much for your time and consideration!

**12. Vicki Perry**  
**Livingston, MT**

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Livingston Education Foundation I would like to submit that it is not our intention to include the YES District, if approved, in our scope of work.

The Livingston Education Foundation currently works with our community to support the Livingston School Districts 1&4. We partner with many organizations that are actively and innovatively teaching the youth in our schools. While we are in favor of looking outside the box and providing exceptional opportunities for the students in all of Park County, we feel that our current district and teachers are working to provide many of things proposed in the YES school application.

**13. Ashley Rogers**  
**Livingston, MT**

I wanted to share my overwhelming support for the Yellowstone Experience School (YES). We are residence and home owners in Livingston. Adding a charter school and improving educational options could be a strong benefit to the community.

**14. Molly Flynn-Berman**

I'm writing this letter as the parent of three neurodiverse children to express my enthusiastic support for the establishment of the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) in Livingston. The unique educational opportunities this school promises to provide will be a transformative resource for families like mine and others in the area.

For neurodivergent children, finding an educational environment that fosters their individual strengths, accommodates their needs, and nurtures their potential can be challenging—especially in rural areas where specialized services are often limited. YES is poised to bridge this gap by offering an inclusive, innovative, and adaptable learning model tailored to diverse learners.

What particularly excites me about YES is its commitment to smaller class sizes, personalized learning plans, and access to trained educators who understand the unique needs of neurodivergent students. These features are crucial for my children's success. My children thrive in environments where there is understanding and flexibility—qualities that traditional schools, due to larger student populations and constrained resources, may struggle to provide consistently.

Moreover, the school's focus on experiential learning and social-emotional development aligns perfectly with the kind of support my children require to build confidence, develop critical life skills, and achieve academic success. This approach not only benefits neurodivergent students, but creates a learning culture where every child can excel.

As a parent, I've seen the profound impact that the right educational setting can have on a child's growth and well-being. All three of my children have attended schools run by Leslie Kennedy and Emily Post. The growth we witnessed from them while they were in the care of these dedicated educators was deeply transformative, both for them and for us as a family. YES, the brainchild of these women in partnership with Baily Goodwine, represents an opportunity to provide children with diverse learning needs a chance to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. It also offers parents in our community peace of mind, knowing that their children are in an environment where they are valued and supported. I have the deepest confidence and trust in Emily, Leslie, and Baily to not only meet the expectations of our community, but to exceed them.

I urge you to approve the establishment of the Yellowstone Experience School and support its mission to serve as a beacon of hope and opportunity for families in our area. This school has the potential to set a new standard for inclusive education in rural communities and to change the trajectory of countless lives—including my children's.

**15. Ashlie Sarah Slunaker**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am currently a reading/math intervention teacher in Livingston Public Schools. I have many misgivings about the charter school that is being proposed in Livingston by Emily Post.

Ms. Post was previously the director/owner of Eduactio, a private elementary school here in Livingston, MT. Since its inception, we have had MANY students transfer into our school from Eduactio, and ALL have been SIGNIFICANTLY behind their peers in not only reading by math as well.

This year, specifically, I am working with a 2nd grader who did not know a SINGLE letter of the alphabet, yet Ms. Post assured his parents that it was not crucial that he learn to read as a 2nd grade student. He was never evaluated for a learning disability, although he has been flagged by EVERY scientifically based academic screener we have in place at Winans school. He has not responded to intervention and upon testing, was discovered to be a dyslexic student with double deficits in math and reading. This has happened not only this year but also the two years previous.

Should Ms. Post be allowed to open a charter school, I worry that students with disabilities will be handed over to our public school and overtax our systems. She has proven time and time again to not know what students with disabilities need or deserve in order to learn. I am disgusted by her philosophy of letting students fail while simultaneously charging parents an exorbitant price for her supposed educational expertise. A school with her as a leader will certainly be a failure.

**16. Nickie Nelson**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am writing to share my thoughts about the Yellowstone Experience School as an educator and concerned citizen of Livingston. I have been a teacher for 20+ years both in California and Montana. I currently work at Winans Primary School and teach first grade.

While I do feel there is a need for an education option for families and children who don't thrive in the traditional school model, especially in grades 6-12, I am deeply concerned about the person who is spearheading this project. Emily Post (owner of Educatio) has made a name for herself as a person who has provided low quality education experiences that have resulted in dramatic lags in proficiency.

I have am friends with two families who attended Educatio and in both cases, the students were up to 2 years behind in grade level proficiency in math and reading skills. I was asked to tutor one of these students and gave her a standardized assessment for first grade which she did not pass as a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader. This is alarming. Her handwriting skills, writing and math skills, and overall education appeared to have been lacking in all areas.

In addition, it was shared with me that the staff who worked for Emily Post were also not paid the wages they were earned as Ms. Post had mismanaged her funds and was forced to close her doors and shut the school down. This left the families in her attendance in a difficult position. They had no school to attend and were very behind academically.

The concept of Yellowstone Experience School (YES), as a "magnet" type school such as a project-based learning option, would benefit our community as an alternative choice for children who would prosper in a different academic setting. However, the management of that school and design would require a skilled and proven leader, which Emily Post is not.

The YES charter school would pull resources and funding from Livingston's public schools that are already facing difficulties due to budget cuts. Opening YES would offer a subpar experience by a leader who has produced results that are far from desirable. I truly believe this would be a mistake and a gross misuse of funds that are needed by our public schools in Livingston.

**17. Crystal Cropper**  
**Livingston, MT**

I wanted to share our experience with Educatio last year (2023/2024) and hopefully help stress the importance and need for such schools in our rural community.

While we only had one year to experience the wonderful services that Educatio provided, it was one of the best years we had had educationally in the 4 years we had lived in Montana. Being the "new kid" is not an easy thing for children to endure here in this rural setting, where many of the children have grown up with each other and have been in the same classroom together since kindergarten. Educatio provided a safe and

caring environment that is imperative for children's self esteem and healthy development. Educatio and their staff were also there for us during one of the most difficult years of our life. The safe and caring environment of this school was exactly what we needed after a very unexpected personal loss. The individualized education that my child recieved during this year helped tremendously and the real life experiences they offered the students are not something you often see offered in a public school setting (I am sure, due some of the restraints that are often put on public schools). The experiences these students were given were truly impactful. From real world experience such as learning about the city and state they live in, to banking, ordering and purchasing their own lunches at local restaurants, coming up with their own fundraising ideas and implementing them, to an amazing informational trip to Washington DC; the opportunities were huge and not something you typically see in a larger school setting. My child is thriving in the school he is in now (academically and socially) and a part of the credit for this goes to Educatio and its educators for setting the students up for sucess. Had the option to continue at Educatio been available this year, we would have done so.

In my time working in education as a district testing coordinator and other various roles here in Montana I have noticed the rural setting in this area limits different educational opportunities, especially for grades 7-12. This area is, unfortunately, lacking in offering different opportunities for educational needs and the addition of a school such as Yellowstone Experience School would greatly bridge those gaps and offer students and their families an additional option in their educational needs, especially if they are noticing that those needs are not being met with the current options in this area.

Over the years educational needs of students have changed significantly and are continuing to change constantly and I can only see the addition of such a school as a benefit to the community for years to come.

#### **18. Tara Livermore Livingston, MT**

I am an MTSS Coordinator in Livingston and I am writing a public comment about the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) that is being considered as a public charter school in our district.

In our district, there have been multiple privately funded schools that seem to be a promise for families of a more project-based approach. These schools tend to last a very short time for whatever reason. In the event of these schools shutting down, these students are pushed back into our public school system.

Educatio, previously owned and operated by Emily Post, was a school that looked like a fun, exciting place for students to learn. But when the school closed due to poor financial management, these students were sent to our public school system and it was very apparent that these students had little academics being taught to them. During initial screening at Winans, students from Educatio were grade levels below in benchmark testing in Literacy and Math. I also have friends in the community that feel like their children that attended Educatio were cheated out of an educational opportunity and paid for it financially and at the expense of their child's learning.

Aside from Academics, students with challenging behaviors seem to have little to no support within our private schools and Educatio alike. In the 2024-2025 academic school year, we have had three students that have had to leave their private school and sent our direction because the behaviors are too overwhelming for their schools. They do not have the resources like we have diligently worked hard to obtain over the course of the last ten years. Currently, at our school, we have many moving parts including an ABA certified behavior specialist working with students, contracted mental health provider services that supply our school



with therapy for students exhibiting challenging behaviors and paraeducators that are able to follow through with intervention plans for students with these behavioral needs.

Livingston School District has a great product for students attending public school. We provide specialist classes, like Library, PE, Music and Guidance. Our special education services include specialized academic instruction from highly trained teachers and behavioral staff. Within that, we provide speech, physical and occupational therapy. Students who are challenged academically, but do not meet special education criteria have support through our MTSS intervention model. Students in our schools, district-wide have access to individual behavioral therapy and family support. Parents and students have access to our partnership with the parent liaison program that gives resources assisting with basic family needs. Students have access to nurses to assist with their healthcare needs. Livingston's Farm to School program has given students healthy meals and opportunities to grow their own foods and learn about sustainability. The list can go on. There are so many great things happening in our schools that haven't always been in place and that is because we have worked so hard as a state, district and community to provide for our families and their children. I worry that charter schools, like YES, will pull from these resources that are already challenging to fund and staff.

**19. Kris King**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a tax payer within the Livingston Public School District giving public comment on the application of the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) public charter school. I have been paying into public school districts for over four decades despite having no children. This does not mean that I do not feel strongly about the importance of a public school education. I believe that Charter Schools take funds away from public schools, are less accountable and more vulnerable to individual or extreme belief agendas. The recent attacks on public school teacher curriculum, attempts to ban books and other extreme parental interference has some guard rails with school boards, teacher unions (I hope!) and public support of those under attack. I am not confident these guard rails would be in place at a charter school and would further undermine the overstretched public school budget.

**20. Michele Boyd**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a resident of Livingston as well as a retired teacher from the Livingston Public School System. Currently, I am a youth services librarian and a tutor. I am **NOT** in favor of the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) proposal for many reasons. A few of the key ones I will address here.

1. The women who have written this proposal are not licensed educators who know what it takes to run an accredited school and meet the educational needs of the children of Livingston.
2. They state the possibility of using Washington School as a learning site. This school was closed because it needs many updates and repairs which are very expensive and the expenses were not within the school district budget to fix. This building would not be suitable for K-12 students as everything in the building is suitable for young children, not young adults such as high school students. There is only one bathroom for boys and one for girls. Not a good situation for students ranging in ages 5-18.
3. They state over and over throughout their proposal of having a small teacher to student ratio. That would not be the case with 40 K-3 students in one classroom, which isn't even legal, nor are the classrooms large enough for that many students. Our public schools keep class sizes within accredited

standards plus many if not most, of our primary classrooms have a second adult in the room to assist with students

4. They talk about contracting with the Park County Coop for special services. Quite honestly, they need at least one person if not 2 on site to help with special services whether that be speech, OT, 504 plans, or learning disabilities.
5. The proposed calendar is not conducive to consistent learning when they are constantly taking a full week off each month. Young children need consistency in their learning if they are going to make gains in reading, writing, and math skills , which are essential for the lower elementary students.

I could go on and on but I will stop here for now. I appreciate you taking the time to read my email and consider my comments that the YES proposal is not in the best interest of our children and community.

**21. Joe Kmetz**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a resident of Livingston with a daughter at Winans. I am writing to let you know that I am against the Yellowstone Experience School and I feel the board should not approve their application. I would much rather see our taxpayer money spent on our existing schools, teachers and resources already in place.

**22. Rae Stevenson**  
**Livingston, MT**

I would like to speak out against the YES charter. I was born and raised in Livingston and its public school through Winans, Sleeping Giant and Park High which prepared me well for medical school and am now a physician in town. I was also raised by a teacher. I have been very concerned that our Montana teachers are short staffed and underpaid. There is nothing more equalizing or liberating than access to a high quality public school system. I plan to raise my boys in the Livingston Public School system. I know how hard teachers work and they deserve to be well compensated and fully staffed.

I really appreciate all that you do. We need to be certain that our core public education and amazing teachers are well funded and well supported before investing tax dollars in another school system.

**23. Jennifer Sestrich**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a resident of Livingston and reside in the Livingston school district. My three children have attended the Livingston schools for the past 12 years. I am against approval of the YES charter school as I fear this will detour funding for our already financially strapped school district. In addition, I feel that without standards for the charter school, when these students resume into the public school system, the lack of standards will create even more of a discrepancy in student competency which ends up affecting all the students in the class when the teachers end up trying to catch students up academically or fill in gaps that might have been missed. Approval of a public charter school in Livingston will have a negative effect on our students.

**24. Piper Kmetz**  
**Livingston, MT**

I have a 7-year-old daughter who attends Winans Elementary. I am against the Charter School because I fear that it will take kids, funds and resources away from the public school system. We live in a small community and I strongly believe we need to pull TOGETHER to raise our Livingston children rather than divide apart. I fear that a charter school will further segregate children in this community economically as well. There are obviously people who are very passionate about education and children in Livingston and I think we would be best served to pour those passionate resources into the public school system we already have in operation. Together we can be stronger and I fear that divided we will just be separate, disjointed and not as cohesive as an educational community. I would love to see resources pooled into the existing educational structures we have and not re-invent the wheel to further segregate our community.

**25. Madeleine Doak**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a Livingston resident within the public school district and a mother of 3 children who have been or are currently enrolled at Park High.

I am against the YES proposal. Our district is already struggling to find teachers to fill all the necessary positions and funding is spread thin. Another school is not necessary for our current population and would add to the difficulty of finding teachers and funding for the schools that already exist in our district. We need to focus on improving the existing schools and increasing pay for teachers rather than diluting resources by adding another school.

**26. Rachael Jones**  
**Livingston, MT**

As a long-time Livingston resident, parent and executive director of a school-based nonprofit, I do not support this charter school application.

The proposal lacks much-needed school support, risks diverting resources from the existing public schools and does not clearly show how it will achieve better outcomes without adding financial strain to taxpayers. That said, I believe the school district has an opportunity to explore the positive elements of the application, such as innovative educational approaches, and use them to enhance its own offerings and strengthen community relations. I hope our community can build on what's already working in our schools while creating areas for improvement collaboratively.

I urge the Board to prioritize strengthening our current public schools and leveraging this moment to foster growth and innovation within the district.

**27. Ben Hahn**  
**Livingston, MT**

As Dean of Students at Winans Primary School and resident within our Livingston school district, I, Ben Hahn, am incredibly proud to be a part of the Livingston Public School District. Our district is not just a hub of academic excellence but also a community that thrives on collaboration, innovation, and the unwavering commitment of its educators and staff. Each day, I witness the remarkable efforts of our teachers and support staff who create an environment where every child feels valued, supported, and encouraged to reach

their full potential. The shared dedication to student success defines our schools and propels our district forward.

At Winans Primary School, I have had the privilege of seeing extraordinary growth in our students firsthand. From mastering foundational skills to developing a love for learning, our students inspire me with their curiosity, resilience, and enthusiasm. This growth is a direct result of the exceptional educators who invest time, creativity, and care into their teaching. They make learning meaningful and ensure every student is set up for success, creating a foundation that will serve them well throughout their academic journey and beyond.

This commitment to excellence extends beyond our classrooms. Recently, our teachers made us proud by participating in a national literacy summit, where they not only learned from leading experts but also showcased their own innovative practices. Hosting workshops and sharing research that gained national attention underscores the caliber of educators we have in our district. It is moments like these that highlight how Livingston Public Schools not only meets but exceeds the standard for educational leadership. Together, we are building a brighter future for every student who walks through our doors.

With all of this in mind, I am opposed to the establishment of the proposed YES Public Charter School, as our community simply does not require such an institution. Our current public schools are already meeting the needs of our students with strong academic programming and a deep understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities in our area. The introduction of a charter school risks diverting critical funding and resources from our existing schools, which have a proven track record of success. Furthermore, serious concerns must be raised about the ability of the YES founders to manage and sustain a school effectively, given their questionable track record in education. Without demonstrated competence and a clear, evidence-based justification for this school, I believe this initiative could do more harm than good for the families and students in our community.

**28. Genevieve Reid**  
**Livingston, MT**

We are long time residents of Livingston and have had a child in the public schools here since 2006, our last will graduate in 2033(!!!). That's a lot of personal experience with the Livingston public school system with different kids, with different needs, different teachers, superintendents, principals etc. and 99% of our experiences have been positive. Teachers and administrators have been creative and responsive to children's needs and have worked to find solutions to institutional and individual problems.

Opening a charter school here, that offers no new solutions, is a distraction of attention and a dilution of limited resources with no clear need or benefit. Please do not approve this application for a new school in our community.

**29. Ann Fuer**  
**Livingston, MT**

I had the good fortune of hosting the Forest School, the first iteration of the YES school, on my four acres in Livingston, Montana. Instead of being in a classroom, these children had formal lessons under a huge willow tree and by a creek. In free time, they discovered the secret lives of animals, birds, fish, insects, and reptiles. They fed chickens and red worms. First came their observation, then exploration, then understanding, then imagination and invention. There were answers and questions from the teacher. They learned to be considerate of their peers and the natural environment. They learned a deep understanding of

how the world of Nature works; when the wind blows how does it affect the trees and creek water. They could see and feel how movement generates more movement. By being still they could be watchful; observation leads to inventions and in this busy world we need new solutions to how we can adapt to changing weather patterns and earth upheavals.

The currency of the future world will be in the relationships of trust between Nature and Humanity. The need for alternative education is a priority.

**30. Lindsay Counts**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a resident of Livingston, MT. My two children attend schools within the Livingston Public Schools District.

I do not support the implementation of YES Public Charter School at this time. Our financial resources for our public schools are stretched thin as it is without the addition of another school which seeks public funding. I would prefer we focus those resources on our current schools.

**31. Quinten Counts**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a resident of Livingston, MT. My two children attend schools within the Livingston Public Schools District. I do not support the implementation of YES Public Charter School at this time.

**32. Baily Goodwine**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) and its mission to provide an innovative, community-centered education option for families in Livingston and the surrounding areas. As someone deeply connected to our community, I believe YES will address an important need for diverse and high-quality educational opportunities in Park County.

The Yellowstone Experience School offers a unique blend of rigorous academics, experiential learning, and character development. Its focus on cultivating critical thinking, environmental stewardship, and a love of lifelong learning is perfectly aligned with the values and needs of our community. By integrating Montana's rich cultural and natural heritage into its curriculum, YES will empower students to become engaged citizens and thoughtful leaders who are deeply rooted in their environment and history.

Livingston is a vibrant community, but like many rural areas, we face challenges in meeting the diverse educational needs of our families. YES will complement existing public school options by providing an alternative model tailored to hands-on learning and individual growth. This school will not only attract and retain families seeking innovative education for their children but will also strengthen our local economy and build a foundation for a more resilient and connected community.

The team behind YES is composed of passionate educators and community leaders dedicated to fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment. Their commitment to transparency, accountability, and high standards of academic excellence ensures that this school will be an asset to our region.

I urge the State Board of Education to approve the Yellowstone Experience School's charter application. This school represents a forward-thinking approach to education that will benefit students, families, and the broader Livingston community for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require further insight into the community's need for YES.

**33. Chelsey Murphy**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a Livingston Montana resident, mother, and educator. I specialize in Early Childhood Education and hold a Montessori Teaching Certificate.

As an educator, I fully believe that there is not one approach to education that fits the needs of all. This can be due to family values, beliefs, child personalities, and a proper and appropriate approach to educational engagement.

That being said, I do not feel that YES would be beneficial to our community at this time. One of the leading reasons for this is due to the foundation of people putting forth this proposal. The YES model has been adapted from a previously failed private school that was based on a project based curriculum. I LOVE this idea. However, many students, including my own child, experienced a highly inappropriate approach to learning and communication which drastically affected their reading scores while in the facility.

I have spoken to the founding board as well as the head of the project. I am also on the sounding board and have received the same feedback in this position. There has been no clear communication regarding their approach to education, curriculum, or standards they will set during the teacher hiring process. As a matter of fact, they are refusing to address community concerns as a whole for clarification and understanding.

If this Charter School was to be approved it would affect the community, schools, and students as a whole. Without appropriate planning and realistic understanding of what YES would be is concerning. Especially when it will directly affect our schools and the employment of the teachers we already have in place for our students. I wonder if this proposal would be most successful as a private entity.

**34. Bob Westermann**  
**Livingston, MT**

Please note I am a resident, property owner, and tax payer within the boundaries of Livingston Public School District.

I believe in the power of quality public education as currently provided by Livingston Public Schools. I have personally witnessed excellent academic and social growth by my two grandson's who have attended Livingston Schools for 8 and 6 years respectively. Consolidation of Livingston's limited financial resources into one educational model is the BEST path forward. Funding a second option (YES) will harm the current schools and launch an educational model in Livingston that has demonstrated, over time, very limited academic success.

Please act in our children's best interests and deny the establishment of Yellowstone Experience School. Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments above.

**35. Marshall Swearingen**  
**Livingston, MT**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment about the application for the proposed Yellowstone Experience School (YES) public charter school. I reside within the city of Livingston and have a six-year-old attending kindergarten at our public Winans Primary School.

In brief, although I sympathize with the goals of the YES organizers, I'm concerned about the impact to our Livingston public school system and encourage you to deny this application.

Prior to my son attending Winans, he went to a private Montessori daycare/school for almost five years. That school offers programs for children up through age 14. We were very happy with the care and education that our son received there, and view it as a good option if he needs a different educational environment in the future. The proposed YES curriculum seems to have a lot of overlap with Montessori in terms of project-based learning and giving individual attention and flexibility to students who may struggle with traditional curriculum. The Montessori school tuition was sometimes a challenge for us, although in the last couple years they have worked to connect parents with the financial support services available through the state.

Livingston has multiple Montessori schools and also the Educatio project-based private school. These are schools that have been established and maintained with private funding and tuition. I think it's great that we have these options for our kids. But I'm opposed to using our limited tax dollars to help fund a private charter school.

My son at Winans is already feeling the effects of the budget crunch in our school district. As you may know, kindergarten until recently had its own space at Washington school. Because of deferred maintenance and the fixed costs of operating in multiple locations (this is my understanding of the issue), Washington closed and kindergarten is now packed into Winans along with first and second grade. If we're struggling to fund our basic school infrastructure, how can we add and support an additional charter school within the district? This seems like a basic and obvious rationale for denying this application.

Our highest priority should be ensuring that our Livingston public schools have the resources they need to provide quality education to all our kids. Thank you for your consideration.

**36. Jared White**  
**Livingston, MT**

I'm writing to share my concerns about the proposed charter school, Yellowstone Experience School (YES), in Livingston. As someone who is currently raising a 4-year old and 6-year old with the help of our public schools, I worry about what this might mean for our community.

Our public schools are already stretched thin, and funding YES would take even more resources away. Public schools rely on stable budgets to keep good teachers, run important programs, and give every kid a fair shot. If funding is pulled, it could hurt the schools most families in our community count on.

There's also the issue of accountability. YES wouldn't answer to our local school board, which means it wouldn't reflect the needs of Livingston families. That's a big deal for a small town like ours.

Lastly, charter schools like YES can create divisions. While it might attract some families, it risks leaving behind kids who need the most support, making our schools more unequal.

Instead of starting something new, I believe we should focus on making the schools we already have stronger. I ask the Board to reject this application and keep public education a priority for all our kids. Thank you for your time.

**37. Kim Pfof**  
**Livingston, MT**

Please note I am a resident, property owner, and tax payer within the boundaries of Livingston Public School District.

I believe in the power of quality public education as currently provided by Livingston Public Schools. I have personally witnessed excellent academic and social growth by the many children of Livingston I associate with. Consolidation of Livingston's limited financial resources into one educational model is the BEST path forward. Funding a second option (YES) will harm the current schools and launch an educational model in Livingston that has demonstrated, over time, very limited academic success. Please act in our children's best interests and deny the establishment of Yellowstone Experience School.

**38. Brogan Ballard**  
**Livingston, MT**

I am a Livingston resident, a father, and a Special Education teacher in Livingston. Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to education in Montana. I am reaching out to please urge you to **vote no on the Yellowstone Experience School charter school application.**

The YES Charter school is not in a place to start a public charter school at this time. Their application is incomplete and it would be unreasonable to expect them to be ready to open with their current staffing and location challenges.

The Livingston school board voted against the charter school because they do not see a viable way for the school to run successfully and feel it would take funding and resources away from the Livingston School District.

Lastly, this school would put additional, non-required, financial burdens on the residents of Livingston through additional levies/resource distribution.

It seems that all approved Charter schools in Montana have been under the umbrella of their home district and has ENHANCED the home district. The Yellowstone Experience School does not enhance our current district, students, or community. Thanks for all your hard work.

**39. Shanna Webb**  
**Livingston, MT**

As a member of the Livingston community, local scout leader, and parent of a third grader at the public school, I would like to express my opinion against the formation of a charter school. I believe this to be an unnecessary addition to Livingston. Currently there are several alternative elementary schools in Park County available to our residents.



A charter school would take more from our children than it would contribute. In addition to much needed tax money being syphoned away from the public school our special services staff and support staff would be stretched to the limits of their patience.

I think it would be shortsighted not to consider the quality of life of our skillful and trained professionals. Many of our teachers have their own children in the public system. Can we afford to lose any of these people?

Instead I would encourage parents who have a strong desire to ensure a quality education to become a bigger part of our parent and school community. It is likely they are unaware of what is available to them and their child.

**40. KJ and Barth Schretenthaler**  
**Livingston, MT**

We are long-time residents of Livingston, MT and have a 17 y.o. son in the public school system here. We are writing this email to express our opposition to the MT BOE approving the pending application from YES to become a public charter school in Livingston. We do not feel there is a need for this in our community, as several of their proposed programs are already offered in our school district. They are also proposing more administrative positions than teachers, creating added financial burden. Our public schools are not perfect, but they serve EVERYONE, including those with special needs. Our family and many others in our community are very pleased with Livingston Public Schools' teachers, administration and curriculum and don't want to see them lose students or funding by approving this poorly-planned public charter school. Our schools are already underfunded, which has worsened with decreased enrollment #'s during the pandemic. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to deny this application.

**41. Julie Williams**  
**Livingston, MT**

I want to register my concerns about the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) charter application. I am writing as a resident of Park County as well as a parent to express my concerns with this charter application and the inaccuracies within it.

First, the charter application claims that the local school district building (Washington elementary) they hope to use was shut down due to low enrollment on the district. This is a flat out lie. The building was shut down due to much needed repairs that the school district could not fund with the current budget. There is a high probability this building will need to be repaired and reopened in the next few years due to the increase in births in Park county from 2021-today. The classrooms that were in Washington are all currently housed in Winans elementary, where they are stretched to capacity. The application was disingenuous in their phrasing around this building, and I feel it's important that the state know the full details of the situation.

Second, Emily Post, the person spearheading the efforts to get YES going, is the former head of the failed Educatio private school in town. This school could not retain qualified staff and failed the students who were enrolled, many of whom were far behind their public school peers by the time the school failed completely. I believe in having options as a parent. But I do not believe that public funds should go to support a model that has already been tested and failed miserably. If the model that YES proposes was working well, it would not have left students unprepared and parents reeling with the collapse of Educatio.

Third, as a lifelong educator and someone who currently works with people with disabilities, the lack of plan for students with disabilities is appalling. This is not something to be pieced together as an afterthought, unless you consider students with disabilities as second class citizens who aren't your concern. My concern is that is what YES is doing due to their lack of planning and care on this matter.

My child recently started school in Livingston and the local schools are doing amazing things with a budget that does not meet their needs. The thought of taking away money from my child's education to fund something that has already been tried and failed makes me nauseous. The impact of YES becoming "a district within a district" as they have proposed would have a negative effect on this community.

Please listen to the people living here who will be impacted, and vote no on this charter application. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**42. Shayla McKnight**  
**Livingston, MT**

My name is Shayla McKnight and I live in Livingston, MT. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed Yellowstone Experience School (YES) and its application for charter status. While I understand that the intention behind YES is to offer an alternative educational model, I believe there are several issues that should be carefully considered before moving forward with this proposal.

1. **Questionable Educational Approach:** YES emphasizes a mixed-methods pedagogy that includes Montessori, Project-Based Learning, and other alternative teaching strategies. While these methods can be effective for some students, there is limited evidence supporting their long-term success in public education, especially for a large and diverse group of students ranging from kindergarten to 12th grade. A one-size-fits-all approach to education may not adequately address the varied learning needs and academic challenges of all students, particularly those who struggle with untraditional teaching methods.
2. **Impact on Traditional Public Schools:** With the YES School proposing to attract students away from existing public schools, the potential for decreased enrollment in local districts is concerning. The loss of students could exacerbate funding issues already facing traditional public schools in Park County, reducing the resources available for students who remain in those schools. This could lead to a further division in education quality between students in public and charter schools.
3. **Limited Accountability and Oversight:** The success of a school with such an unconventional structure is highly dependent on the quality and effectiveness of its teachers. However, there is little information on how YES will ensure accountability for teaching performance, student outcomes, or curriculum delivery. With a curriculum that involves mixed-age groups and varied educational approaches, it is unclear how student progress will be effectively measured or maintained, particularly for those who may struggle in an individualized, less structured environment.
4. **Potential Equity Concerns:** While YES's mission includes promoting equity by providing an alternative for students whose needs may not be met in traditional schools, there is no clear plan for ensuring that the school remains accessible to all students, especially those from underserved communities. The enrollment model, which begins with a small number of students and gradually increases, may also limit access for some families, particularly those in lower-income areas who may not be able to take advantage of a year-round, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule.
5. **Financial Sustainability:** The proposal mentions the expansion of public funding for YES, but it remains unclear how the school will manage such significant growth while maintaining high standards of education and ensuring financial sustainability. The projected increase in student numbers from 130 to 390 over five years raises concerns about whether YES can truly provide the individualized education

it promises, or whether the focus may shift to increasing enrollment numbers rather than prioritizing educational quality.

In light of these concerns, I urge the Board to take a cautious approach in reviewing the YES School's application. While the desire for alternative educational options is understandable, it is crucial that any new school adheres to standards that ensure both quality education and equitable access for all students. I believe more comprehensive oversight and clearer plans for accountability are needed before approving this charter school.

**43. Heather Jurvakainen**  
**Livingston, MT**

This letter is in opposition to the proposed YES charter school in Livingston, Montana. Our public school district is already strapped financially, and this charter school would only take more money and needed resources away, further stressing our system. Also, Livingston school district is known for its high number of students on free and reduced lunches. Charter schools are known for cherry-picking students, while skirting laws and regulations. Our community has no need for this charter program and we need to stay focused on improving our current public school district.

I have been a Park County resident for nearly 20 years with 2 children in the public school system. There are other options in our area for parents who would like an alternative. Thank you for your time.

**44. Meredith Herzog**

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed creation of a charter school that would operate in the Livingston Public School District. As a resident of Montana, I am deeply concerned about the impact this decision would have on our already limited public education system, particularly in a small district with only four schools.

Livingston Public Schools play the primary role in fostering community cohesion and providing equitable access to education for all students. Diverting public funding to a charter school threatens the stability and resources of these schools, which are already operating under limited budgets. Charter schools draw funding directly from public school districts, leaving fewer resources for existing schools to meet the needs of their students. This is especially concerning in a small district, where every dollar is critical for maintaining staff, programs, and facilities.

Charter schools often lack the infrastructure and resources necessary to adequately support students who are behind academically, despite frequently attracting this population. Unlike public schools, which are equipped with specialized staff such as interventionists, special education teachers, and counselors, many charter schools allocate resources toward marketing and administrative costs rather than robust student support services. Charter schools often do not employ licensed and credentialed teachers. Additionally, charter schools may struggle to provide individualized education plans (IEPs) or implement evidence-based interventions for students requiring additional assistance. This results in a situation where students who most need academic support are underserved, leaving them further behind and exacerbating existing educational inequities.

The creation of a charter school also poses significant questions about transparency and accountability. Public schools are subject to oversight by elected school boards and adhere to state education standards.

Charter schools, however, often lack the same level of accountability, raising concerns about the equitable use of taxpayer funds and the quality of education being delivered.

Rather than diverting resources and attention to a new charter school, I urge the Board to focus on strengthening our existing public schools. Our efforts should be directed toward supporting these schools through increased funding, expanded programs, and enhanced professional development for educators—not fragmenting our community and educational system further.

I respectfully request that the Montana Board of Public Education reject the proposal to create a charter school. It is imperative that we prioritize the well-being and success of all students in our community by supporting the existing schools and infrastructure.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I trust that you will carefully consider the potential consequences of this decision and act in the best interest of our students and schools.

### **General Comments**

#### **1. Mary Stegner Hall**

I'm not sure why Montana tax payers should be expected to pay for other parents' choice to send their children to private charter schools. Our granddaughter who lived in Arizona attended a charter school in Maricopa arizona....

Montana Board of Education

12-20-24

Greetings to all:

I am writing to urge you to support the Liberty Academy Charter School Application.

I have been a neighbor, friend, and done business with many of the colonies most all of my life. I know them very well and appreciate their unique lifestyle and educational needs.

The charter school will be a good fit for them. It can be tailored to their needs and lifestyle. They are very committed to education and a life skills approach to life. Their agrarian lifestyle along with great business skills will help keep them competitive.

I have always admired their ability to memorize from a very young age. This serves them very well as they grow up and move into leadership positions. This model serves them well in their ability to compete and survive in a very competitive environment. Their success helps provide a more stable property tax base in our rural counties. This is very important in our rural less populated counties.

I urge you to give them your approval and support.

Bruce "Butch" Gillespie

Senate District 9

To: Montana Board of Public Education  
From: Senator Josh Kassmier  
Topic Liberty Elementary Public Charter School  
Date 12/8/2024

Dear Montana Board of Pubic Education

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Liberty Elementary School's application for charter status. As a dedicated advocate for educational excellence in our community, I have witnessed firsthand the remarkable impact Liberty Elementary has on its students and the surrounding neighborhood.

Liberty Elementary stands out as a beacon of academic achievement and innovation. The school's commitment to fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment for all students is evident in its diverse curriculum, dedicated staff. By emphasizing individualized learning and critical thinking, the school provides its students with the tools necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex world. The implementation of project-based learning initiatives has not only enhanced student engagement but also cultivated essential life skills, such as collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving.

The curriculum at Liberty Elementary provides their students unique opportunities to explore their interests and develop their talents. These programs not only enhance academic performance but also encourage students to pursue their passions, ultimately contributing to well-rounded, confident individuals prepared for future challenges.

As Liberty Elementary seeks to achieve charter status, I am confident that the school will continue to uphold its mission of educational excellence and community service. Charter status will enable Liberty to expand its programs, attract dedicated educators, and further enhance the learning experiences of its students.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse Liberty Elementary School's application for charter status. The school's unwavering commitment to academic achievement and holistic student development makes it an invaluable asset to our community. I look forward to seeing the positive impact that charter status will bring to Liberty Elementary and the students it serves.

Sincerely,  
Senator Josh Kassmier



**ATTORNEYS:**  
Lindsay M. Morse  
Ron A. Nelson  
Amber L. Stenson

**ADMINISTRATOR:**  
Scott A. Rubino

**Phone: 406-761-3000**  
**Fax: 406-453-2313**

**114 3<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Great Falls, MT 59401**  
**2020 Charlotte St., Ste 8, Bozeman, MT 59718**

December 23, 2024

Via E-Mail

Montana Board of Public Education  
46 North Last Chance Gulch  
Helena, MT 59601

**Re: Liberty Elementary School District No. 10 - Liberty Academy Charter School**  
**Our File No. 240253**

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Public Education:

I have been asked to represent Liberty Elementary School District No. 10 ("Liberty School District") with respect to its pending Charter School Application for Liberty Academy Charter School ("Liberty Academy"). It is my understanding that Chair Tharp raised some issues and concerns regarding jurisdictional authority of the Board of Public Education with respect to the Liberty Academy application at the December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Chair Tharp's comments appear to raise two fundamental issues regarding the scope of HB 549 and the Board's authority with respect to the specifics of the Liberty Academy application:

1. May a Charter School enroll students who reside outside of the Governing Board District.
2. May a Charter School enroll and provide instructional services (on-site and web based or remotely) to students at physical locations using facilities located both within and outside the Governing District?

As stated below, we do not believe there is any statutory impediment to the Board's authority to grant the Liberty Application. The Board's approval of Liberty's application is consistent with the terms and provisions and does not violate HB 549 or any other statutory provision.

On its face HB549 addresses the question regarding enrollment of students in the Liberty Academy Charter School who reside outside the Governing District. Section 8(1)(a) requires a Charter School to admit "any student residing in the state." Consistent with this language and correct understanding of HB549, at least three (3) charter school applications approved by the Board in 2023 clearly state in their applications regarding student recruitment and enrollment that each school intends to



comply with that provision. As stated in the 2024 Liberty Academy proposal, it is likewise the intent of the applicant to comply with State Law as outlined and articulated in HB 549 by providing enrollment to students both from within and outside the Liberty District who are residents of the State of Montana.

In addition to this initial citation, there are also additional sections and language contained in HB 549 which support the Legislature's intent to provide statewide open enrollment opportunities for students. HB549 clearly states and contemplates that all charter school student enrollment would include students residing outside school districts of residence. In particular, the following provisions of HB549 cannot be read to limit Charter School enrollment to only those students residing in the Governing District. Rather, these provisions clearly contemplate provision of educational and instructional programming to students anywhere in Montana and residing outside the Governing District's.

Section. 8(2)(a) states that the *"public charter schools shall give enrollment preference to students who are residents of the located school district"*. If the Legislature did not expect or intend for student enrollment in charter school programs to include both *"in district"* and *"out-of-district"* students, Section 8(2)(a) has no meaning or significance. Why would there be any need for a local district student enrollment preference all students must be from the Governing District? As a general principle of statutory construction, each provision must be interpreted to have meaning. Multi-District student enrollment is the only interpretation that gives Section 8(2)(a) any meaning.

Section 12.(3) also elaborates on the expectation that students residing outside the district of attendance would be recognized differently than the students of residence for purposes of calculating funding wherein it states *"students attending a public charter school governed by a local school board who are NOT residents of the located school district generate funding in the same manner as other nonresident students attending a school of the located district under an out-of-district attendance agreement pursuant to Title 20 chapter 5, part 3"*.

In addition to the citations above taken directly from the legislation, it would also appear that by and through their previous actions in approving three (3) specific applications submitted during the 2023 cycle that the Board of Public Education has already addressed and resolved this first concern when it sanctioned similar student recruitment and enrollment structures to those being proposed by both the Liberty Academy and the Montana Connections Academy (2024). Excerpts taken directly from the applications submitted in 2023 and 2024 include the following.

Bozeman Charter School (2023)

*3. Describe plans and timelines for student recruitment and enrollment, including lottery procedures.*

*“The BoCS is currently operational and available to students in-district as well as out-of-district”.*

Kalispell Flathead -PACE (2023)

*“Recruitment for the 2024-25 school year takes place during the high school registration process. This process begins in January of 2024, when current students at Flathead High School learn about course offerings and pathways. The Flathead PACE Academy Registration Handbook information will be provided alongside the traditional Flathead High School Registration Handbook information. We offer recruitment opportunities for students outside of FHS”.*

Missoula CONNECT Academy (2023)

*“The Application Process The annual application process will be open each spring for Montana residents in grades 6-12”.*

Montana Connections Academy-Park City (2024)

*“2. Identify the targeted student population and the community the public charter school proposes to serve. 2. Targeted Student Population & Community Targeted Student Population. MTCA will serve students throughout the state who are eligible to enroll under Montana law, including general education students, students with learning or cognitive disabilities, at-risk students, accelerated students, and English learners. It is anticipated that the school may also serve highly mobile students and will help these students be successful during the time period that a full-time online school is needed. MTCA will provide an alternative learning environment for students who are not thriving in traditional school settings.”*

It is important to note that each of the above applicants, whose charter school proposals were either approved by the MT BPE in 2023 for implementation during the 2024-2025 school year, or those cited herein who have submitted applications during the current proposal cycle (2025-2026), clearly indicate their intent to provide opportunities for open enrollment to students from outside the Governing District.

As to Chair Tharp’s second concern, review of the applicable Montana Statutes which guide, govern and inform the process, includes reference to a statutory mechanism outlined in MCA 20-3-363 wherein educational services may be provided to these resident students by an adjacent school district though the use of a Multidistrict Agreement. Under this legal structure, a located school district who is responsible for providing educational services to students who are recognized residents of the district, may receive direct educational services that are not being provided by the district of residence, but rather through agreement by a district of attendance. Liberty Elementary School District has in the past provided services to students residing outside the Liberty District using this process. Beginning in 2023, due to the introduction of very

complicated and confusing legislative changes in the Multidistrict Agreement Structure (HB 214), Liberty District has, despite repeated attempts, been unable to reach agreement with one or more resident school districts for the continued operation of these sites.

(MCA 20-3-363) This statute presupposes using a Multidistrict Agreement structure reached between two or more districts to allow for example, school district "B" to provide educational services to students who have been attending classes at a "SCHOOL" located within school district "A's" boundaries. Through this agreement, each participating district recognizes the delivery of services at a "SCHOOL" site currently maintained by the district of residence. Authorization is provided through the Multidistrict Agreement for educational services to continue at the resident school location.

Unfortunately, five (5) of the colony communities identified in the Liberty Academy Charter School Application as likely to seek enrollment for their children in the Liberty Academy, have been left without reasonable and viable access to onsite educational services, although they have a history of nearly three decades of continuous onsite educational services. In some instances, these colony communities have been without access to a local public education system for nearly two years for their children due to the failure of their district of residence to either reach agreement with an adjacent School District for the continued delivery of onsite educational services, or to agree to meet their primary obligations to provide culturally rooted, ELL or ESL focused onsite personalized educational services at each of the colony locations. Having no viable alternative for the receipt of appropriate educational services, each of these colony communities has reluctantly been compelled to implement the equivalent of a private or de facto homeschool structure to ensure that their children continue to receive some semblance of a structured educational experience.

It appears that the underlying question to be answered remains, what is the distinction between what is provided for in statute, and what is being proposed by the Liberty Academy Charter School in its application for the operation of off-site remotely located instructional facilities? First and foremost, the applicant is not intending to operate any additional "schools" as part of its operational plan as defined in Montana Code Annotated (MCA 20-6-501), but rather to incorporate the use of appropriate "remote instructional facilities" for the delivery of remote classroom instruction (MCA 20-7-118) to students enrolled in the Liberty School District and receiving instructional programming at any one of the facilities which make up the proposed Liberty Academy Charter School campus.

It is the position of the Liberty Elementary School District Board of Trustees that MCA 20-3-363 is NOT applicable to the operational structure outlined in the Liberty Academy Charter School application as, again, it is not the intent of the Academy to incorporate the use of recognized SCHOOLS which are geographically located within another school district, as schools within the charter program, but rather, and most importantly, the distinction is that the Liberty Academy Charter School will offer students enrolled in

Liberty District an opportunity to attend classes and receive a combination of both on-site and web-based instruction offered through the Liberty Academy, at any one of the remote instructional facilities managed as part of the Liberty Academy Campus. Please Note: the remote instructional facilities identified by and through the Liberty Academy Charter School structure are owned and operated entirely by the individual Hutterite colonies at no expense to the public (state, county or located school district) and therefore are not schools as identified and defined in MCA 20-6-501.

Furthermore, the Liberty district's assertion that these sites are intended solely to be recognized as remote facilities for instructional purposes within the district as opposed to "schools" located outside the District's boundaries is further supported by the language contained in MCA 20-6-501 which identifies the definition of various schools, and states, *"as used in this title, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the term "school" means an institution for the teaching of children that is established and maintained under the laws of the state of Montana **at public expense**".* It logically follows that as no public money was used in the building, operation or the maintenance of these remote instructional facilities, that they are NOT subject to the definition of a school and are therefore not subject to any authority or control by a public school district wherein they may be geographically located. As such, there appears to be no statutory prohibition on identifying them as remote instructional facilities recognized as part of the Liberty Academy campus, nor as incorporating them into the operational structure of the Liberty Academy Charter School. In conclusion, the inference to MCA 20-3-363 by Board member Tharp is NOT applicable to the Liberty Academy Charter School student enrollment and operational plan as the district will NOT be providing student instruction at "schools" located outside their district boundaries, but rather as indicated in the application, will be utilizing the availability of remotely located instructional facilities as an extension of the existing Liberty District and Liberty Academy Campus.

This interpretation and application of the appropriate statutes is further supported by the very language outlined Section 11(5)(f) of HB 549 which states the following:

*"The governing board of a public charter school district has all the powers necessary for carrying out the terms of its charter contract, including the following powers:*

*(f) to acquire real property, for use as its facility or facilities, from public or private sources;"*

Additional MCA Citations which are potentially applicable to the discussion of what state laws authorize student instruction at "remote" classroom locations include the following:

MCA 20-7-118. Remote instruction. (1) A school district may provide remote instruction, including the provision of services through electronic means. A district shall comply with any rules adopted by the board of public education that specify standards for remote instruction. The provision of remote instruction by a district is limited to pupils:

- (a) meeting the residency requirements for that district as provided in 1-1-215;
- (b) living in the district and eligible for educational services under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act or under 29 U.S.C. 794; or
- (c) seeking remote instruction in the nearest district when the pupil's district of residence does not provide remote or in-person instruction in an equivalent course (Insert - Culturally rooted ELL or ESL Instruction) . A course is not equivalent if the course does not provide the same level of advantage on successful completion, including but not limited to dual credit, advanced placement, and career certification.

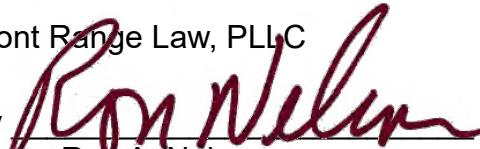
**(2) A school of a district providing remote instruction shall provide remote instruction to an out-of-district pupil under subsection (1)(c) unless, because of class size restrictions, the accreditation of the school would be adversely impacted by providing remote instruction to the pupil.**

(3) The superintendent of public instruction shall adopt rules for the administration and enforcement of this section.

Charter schools represent an intentional transition to a different delivery form for educational services. As with any new paradigm, there are questions that must be analyzed and answered as we progress. The issues raised are worthy of consideration and need to be understood in the context of this transition. Nonetheless, the Legislature has considered and addressed both issues. The Board clearly has authority to grant Liberty Academy's application. The issues raised do not preclude or undercut Liberty's application in any way.

Front Range Law, PLLC

By

  
Ron A. Nelson

- c. Client  
Dylan Klapmeier  
Todd Hanson

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE  
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS  
LT. GOVERNOR

January 21, 2025

Board of Public Education  
PO Box 200601  
Helena, MT 59620

Members of the Board of Public Education,

I am writing regarding applications you are currently considering, and will consider in the future, for public charter schools.

As a strong supporter of ensuring all students have access to a high-quality education regardless of where they live, I encourage the Board to promote innovative educational opportunities on behalf of Montana children as it continues its charter application review process.

In the 2023 legislative session, the Montana Legislature passed House Bill 549, with the support of my office, creating the "Public Charter Schools Act". As you know, the Public Charter Schools Act makes clear that Montana parents desire educational options for their children. Expanding educational opportunities for K-12 education is a necessary and valid public purpose, and the establishment of public charter schools is intended to encourage different models of teaching and instruction to meet a variety of student needs.

These findings and intent are further elaborated in 20-6-802 and 808, MCA, which states that public charter schools must be open to any student residing in the state, local governing boards will determine their enrollment capacity, and the Board of Public Education may not restrict enrollment capacity. Statute is clear that public charter schools must be open to any student in the state, and it is up to the local governing board to determine their enrollment capacity along with a local process to determine enrollment should capacity be reached.


I understand the Board is currently considering applications (and likely will in the future) that are proposing truly innovative models of education that will expand education options for Montana students as prescribed by the Public Charter Schools Act. Some of the most innovative applications may include out-of-the box approaches like remote and hybrid instruction that can meet the needs of traditional students while also breaking down barriers to education for non-public students and students who reside in another district. This creative, thoughtful approach is further supported under 20-7-118, MCA, which states that remote instruction of non-resident students is allowed when "the pupil's district of residence does not provide remote or in-person instruction in an equivalent course."

I encourage the Board to support innovative applications like Liberty Elementary's that will expand educational opportunities for Montana's kids in furtherance of the laws passed by the Legislature. While there are several factors to examine when evaluating charter applications, it is the Board's responsibility to fairly consider and approve applications that demonstrate they will provide a unique and innovative educational experience that complies with the law.

As outlined in 20-6-802 and 811, MCA, it will still be the role of local governing boards to ensure that charter schools follow all state and federal laws and the terms of their charter contract, as well as only enroll eligible students. Upon renewal, if the applicants have not complied with the law or violate the terms of their charter contract, the Board can revoke or not renew the charter per 20-6-810, MCA.

Thank you for your consideration and service to Montana students, families, and schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte", is written over a faint, larger blue ink signature that is partially obscured.

Greg Gianforte  
Governor



To: Montana Board of Public Education  
From: Dr. Gerry Nolan  
Topic: Liberty Elementary Public Charter School  
Date: 12/5/2024

Dear Montana Board of Public Education

It is an honor for me to present this letter of support on behalf of the public charter school application being submitted to the Montana Board of Public Education by the Liberty Elementary School District # 10. It was my good fortune to serve as the superintendent of Liberty Elementary School in 2022 and 2023. I can attest to the commitment and professionalism of the Liberty Elementary School Board of Education. I can also attest to the total commitment to the children's education by the parents and communities served by Liberty Elementary School. There are no better people anywhere. You will find them a joy to work with. In addition, Todd Hanson and the team at Four Poles Consulting provide quality educational services, direction, and counsel for the Liberty Elementary Board, community and students.

The proposed Liberty Charter Academy will provide an opportunity for the parents and children living in these communities to exercise their rights to choose a public school system which best provides opportunities for students to develop their full educational potential. As an advocate for public education systems that meet the needs of all our children, I am voicing my support and am encouraging the Board of Public Education to approve the Liberty Elementary School District – Public School Charter application.

Having served the Liberty Elementary School District and the six colony schools that it supports, I can assure you that this is one of those unique situations for which Public Charter Schools were made. Liberty Charter School will become the poster child for Charter Schools in Montana. As an advocate who loves our profession and has worked in public education for over forty years, I wholeheartedly support the Liberty Charter School application and initiative.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Gerry Nolan

*Gerry J. Nolan*

PO Box 738

West Glacier, Montana – 59936

406.890.3691

[gnhermit@gmail.com](mailto:gnhermit@gmail.com)



Rebecca Ayler, M.A.T., M.Ed.  
1610 East Lewis Street  
Livingston, MT 59047  
becky.ayler@livingston.k12.mt.us  
January 12, 2025

Board of Public Education  
Montana Office of Public Instruction  
1301 E. 6th Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed Yellowstone Experience School (YES) Charter in Livingston, Montana. As a member of the community, a public educator; I am the principal of Sleeping Giant Middle School (SGMS) and have taught and led at both Park High School and SGMS for over 10 years, and an advocate for quality education, I believe it is essential to carefully consider the implications of introducing a new charter school in our area.

My experience as a public educator for 18 years both here in Livingston and in Denver, CO has given me a great insight and knowledge into how charter schools can help communities and provide unique opportunities, however, in the case of YES, it is my professional opinion that neither of these outcomes would come to fruition. I have been in attendance for both of YES's presentations to our local school board and when they presented to you all virtually. I have read their proposal, and I have found extensive evidence as to why this charter should not receive approval to move forward. Below I have outlined such evidence:

1. **Impact on Resources:** Our district and community face challenges with funding and stretching the public dollar thin. Just last year, our community voted down a technology levy in our high school district. Should we introduce another district within our community those already highly sought-after dollars would become even more challenging to secure for our schools and students. In addition, YES proposes purchasing one of our schools that we had to close in recent years. One of the great misconceptions for the closure of that school is that it was due solely to declining enrollment. This is not true – the condition of the building requires so much improvement that it would not be fiscally responsible to try to fix the problems. Also, to my knowledge, the building is not for sale yet. It is presumptuous for the YES charter to assume that they could just purchase the building without the support of our board and superintendent.
2. **Equity in Education:** YES's application and presentations were lacking in their identification of how they would support students with learning disabilities. As an administrator, this is one of the areas of education that requires most of my time. Many of our students with disabilities come from families in poverty and do not have the ability to support their students' needs outside of school. They rely heavily on the school to support their students' learning. My concern is that YES would either not serve those students to the level of need they require, or that they would not admit students with disabilities, leading to huge inequities in our community. In addition, YES proposes paying teachers at higher rates but requiring more work time. As a graduate student in the doctoral program at Montana State University, my area of research is in Collective and Self Efficacy – based on my research and understanding of the practical day-to-day leadership of a school, we know that salary does not directly relate to the improvement of a school, but the

collective efficacy of a staff and the self-efficacy of individuals is what has the greatest impact. Working longer hours will not improve this regardless of the salary.

3. **Accountability Standards:** It is important that all educational institutions, including charter schools, are held to the same high standards of accountability and transparency. My understanding from other states is that charter schools do not have to comply with the same level of standardized testing as public schools. Should this be the same for Montana charters, YES would not have to hold the same rigorous academic expectations that we in the public sector would have to. In addition, we have evidence from experience and testing those students who attended the school previously owned by one of the leaders of YES (Educatio), came to our district after it closed and were at least 2 grade levels behind in reading and math abilities. This is highly concerning. Livingston Public Schools just completed two rounds of the literacy grant from OPI and we are now leaders in early childhood literacy in the state. Our staff present at international conferences and provide a framework for literacy to other academic institutions.
4. **Community Input:** While I understand that YES is taking feedback from the community, they have not taken a moment to ask if what they are proposing is being addressed in our public schools. Based on the individuals who have spoken out in support for YES, it is my belief that they either 1) do not know the incredible work that we are accomplishing in our district, or 2) are disgruntled with our public schools from when they were students, or with a disciplinary issue with their own children and the public schools. Our schools have changed and improved tremendously, even in the decade I have worked for LPS. Our early childhood literacy programming is revolutionary and, as stated before, a model in the state. We host partnerships and provide programming and classes for robust work-based learning at the middle and high school level which are being recognized throughout the state. This year at Sleeping Giant Middle School, we have begun a partnership and the work to integrate place-based learning with Ripple, an organization established by a former teacher, and in partnership with Montana Tech University. We offer robust partnerships with Farm to School where students K-12 are learning sustainable and healthy food production and care. We have so much to offer at LPS, that it would be such a shame to lose enrollment, potentially faculty, and funding to a school whose plan is lofty dream, at best.

I appreciate your time and consideration of these matters as the board deliberates on the future of the Yellowstone Experience Charter School. I urge you to prioritize the needs of our existing public schools and the students they serve.

Sincerely,

Rebecca S. Ayler, M.A.T., M.Ed.  
Principal, Sleeping Giant Middle School

December 30, 2024

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Public Education,

I am writing to express my opposition to the charter application for the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) in Livingston, Montana. As a product of and teacher in Livingston Public Schools, a parent of two Park High graduates, a resident within the Livingston School District boundaries, and as a Park County tax payer, I have significant concerns regarding the potential impact and feasibility of this proposal.

The establishment of YES may **divert critical funding** away from Livingston's traditional public schools, which are already facing budgetary constraints. Public schools rely on stable funding to provide equitable opportunities for all students, maintain essential programs, and hire qualified staff. Under HB 549, YES would receive state funding based on student enrollment, effectively redirecting resources away from public schools that serve the majority of our community's children.

Additionally, there are concerns about the financial sustainability of the entitlements YES would receive. The funding required to support a charter school may **place undue strain on the state's education budget**, potentially resulting in reduced resources for existing public schools. This reallocation of funds could further erode the ability of traditional public schools to meet the diverse needs of their students.

The governance structure of YES, which operates independently of the Livingston Public Schools, **raises concerns about accountability**. The proposed charter school would not be directly answerable to the local elected school board, which represents the community's interests. This disconnect could lead to decisions that do not align with the needs or values of Livingston residents.

Charter schools, including YES, have the potential to **exacerbate educational inequities**. While YES emphasizes a Montessori and project-based approach, there is a risk that the school may selectively attract students who already have access to educational advantages, leaving behind those with greater needs. This could contribute to socioeconomic and educational segregation within our community.

The application process has highlighted mixed feelings within the community regarding the need and feasibility of YES. While some may support the concept, the **absence of widespread, demonstrable community backing** raises questions about the school's ability to sustain enrollment and fulfill its mission.

For these reasons, I urge the Montana Board of Public Education to reject the YES charter application. I strongly believe that our focus should remain on strengthening our existing public schools to ensure all students, regardless of background, have access to a high-quality education.

Thank you for considering my concerns. I trust the Board will carefully weigh the potential consequences of approving this application and make a decision that prioritizes the best interests of Livingston's students and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Megan Brenna". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Megan Brenna

Dear esteemed members of the Montana Board of Public Education,

I am writing this letter to share my support for the creation of the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) in Livingston. This school will provide excellent opportunities for students and parents in our community.

Project-based teaching environments create unique learning experiences for students, provide individual feedback and learning plans, and a space where students can be creative, invested in their learning, and gain fundamental skills and knowledge.

As a previous teacher at a project-based learning school, run by Emily Post, I especially enjoyed the smaller classes, the ability to tailor lessons and curriculum to specific student needs, the willingness of the community to provide immersive learning opportunities for our students and a work environment that emphasized creativity and flexibility.

Project-based education promotes critical thinking skills, team work, problem solving, communication, collaboration, and working within your community to solve problems close to home. Student growth is easily witnessed because of the close connection with teachers and the small class sizes. Continual check-ins and observations ensure student engagement and development.

It was a pleasure to work with Emily Post, she values students, their education and strives to provide the best possible learning environment. Her passion for project-based learning is evident from the time she spends planning with her teachers, community outreach members and parents of her students. She continually strives to make each day full of valuable learning experiences.

I encourage you to approve the establishment of the Yellowstone Experience School, and allow students in our community a chance for another meaningful, inclusive education experience.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Kelsi Fisher

315 South 8th ST  
Livingston, MT 59047  
January 8, 2025

Montana Board of Public Education  
46 N Last Chance Gulch, Suite 2B  
PO Box 200601  
Helena, MT 59620

Esteemed Board Members:

I am writing to express my opinion regarding the proposed Yellowstone Experience School (YES) charter school in Livingston. I am writing as a citizen and taxpayer who lives within the Livingston School District (LSD), as a parent of a former student in the LSD, and as a current employee, as a physical therapist, in the LSD. I am in opposition to the proposed YES charter school based on concerns that I have regarding funding for the school, redundancy in programming between the charter school and public school, and lack of evidence of sustainability of the charter school.

Admittedly, I would have enjoyed having the option of a hands-on, experiential based alternative public education for my son when he was attending middle and high school in the LSD. At the time he was attending LSD, the district was just beginning to develop these types of opportunities. Currently, there is a Work-Based Learning program available at the high school which allows students to develop vocational skills and achieve credentialing in areas that are applicable to real world jobs. It seems that focusing resources on already existing programs within the LSD would be a better use of taxpayer funds.

I did review the YES Public Charter Application and noted proposed areas that already exist within the LSD. My husband is a vegetable farmer, and we have worked closely with the Farm-to-School program that serves the LSD. The current Farm-to-School program already has much of the infrastructure and connections necessary to assist students who would like to participate in farming and learn more about an agricultural lifestyle. Again, it would seem that assisting the LSD to diversify its offerings to the students enrolled in the district would be a better use of time and resources.

I have several general concerns about the YES charter school. Washington School owned by the LSD was closed partly due to the cost of facility maintenance. Reopening it to a charter school does not seem like a sound fiscal decision. The LSD can barely

find enough teachers and paraeducators to fulfill staffing needs especially in special education. How is YES going to find enough staff? There is currently a gap between salary and cost of living in Livingston which affects everyone in education. If YES had been a successfully running educational entity before its application as a charter school, and all that it needed was state support so that it could better serve all students regardless of ability to pay, then it seems like the LSD would have voted in favor of incorporating it into the district. As it was, YES was not a functioning school nor did it have a brick and mortar location of its own. At this point, it is my opinion that approving the YES charter school would only remove funds from the current LSD causing a decline in the educational services in Livingston instead of enhancing them.

Finally, it is my opinion that, instead of creating a separate entity that will draw funds away from the economically challenged Livingston School District, the proponents of the YES charter school should work with the district to enhance the experiential and hands-on learning opportunities that already exist in the LSD. Thus, truly improving the educational opportunities for all in Livingston. I envision too many negative impacts on this community's educational system for me to support the YES charter school. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Caroline Rehder

December 13, 2024

To Whom It May Concern

It has come to our attention that a character assassination has been attempted on a community member that has been crucial to our child's education and growth. Four years ago my husband and I were planning on homeschooling our child because we were completely against entering our child into the public school system for numerous reasons. We became aware of Educatio and were thoroughly aligned with the values of the school. We met with Emily Post and soon realized that Educatio's focus on building a child's love of learning and creating vast opportunities for growth and expansion while also prioritizing not only high quality education, but also emotional health wellbeing, was aligned with our family.

Over the course of the three years that we were enrolled with Educatio, our child thrived in the environment that Emily Post provided. We are certain she would have floundered in the public school system and her passion would have been watered down to match the standards required. Emily Post and Educatio provided a structured educational environment that supported a child's passion for learning and exploration. The way that Emily Post cultivated the school was exceptionally child centered. My husband and I can only wish that we had this type of education when we were younger.

During week two of our child's first grade year, her teacher told us that she was already a third of the way through the math book for first grade standards! Coincidentally, another of her teacher's explained that she was prepared to teach our child how to read and was surprised to know that she can already read and thus is able to build her education on where *she* is academically and emotionally, rather than being held back by classroom standards. Educatio also provides opportunities for extra support when a concept is not understood, rather than moving on to be aligned with standards. This level of dedication and opportunity for learning is uncommon and should not be ignored.

It should also be noted that within our community resides not only bullying, but also intense mental health needs for children, as we have suffered numerous heartbreak in our community from the impact that bullying has had on young children and suicide. To have an option like the school Emily Post created that focused on building self esteem and kindness as part of its curriculum is insurmountable. The children got to know each other on a unique level as they get to intermingle on a daily basis. Our child (who is currently 8 years old) has friends who are 3 years old and friends who are 13 years old, all because of the vision of Emily Post. This in and of itself is extraordinary.



Educatio values experiences. Our child has grown in all the ways we never imagined she could in a school environment, but Educatio was not just any school. The specialness of the vision and Emily Post's dedication is unlike anything we encountered. We are forever grateful for this school and desperately hope to see our child through her years with Educatio.

Charter status would grant this community the opportunity to continue providing the type of education that is desperately needed. With a public charter option in Livingston, children and families could thrive and continue to do what they do best-tailor the education specifically to each child's needs and interest. It should be noted that I have never encountered another adult who not only respects children, but truly views them as people-with full opinions, and celebrates each child in their unique way. It is because of Emily Post that we chose to homeschool our child following the closure of Educatio.

This closure was exceptionally difficult, as we were around during the mutiny that the teaching staff of the 2022-2023 school year attempted. It was after school ended that I received a voicemail from Sara Driscoll, telling me that she was uncertain if Educatio would be continuing for the following school year. I was informed that the teachers were unhappy and not continuing their relationship with the school. I immediately called Emily Post to confirm. It needs to be noted that Emily was traveling for a memorial service for a loved one and had no idea what was happening. As soon as she was informed, she tried communicating for resolution. The teachers had a list of demands that were given to Emily and required the demands be met before moving forward, and as time constraints would not allow everything to be fulfilled by the board, they walked. They not only left, but the impact that the teachers made on character assassinations of Emily was devastating, as our entire experience exceeded our expectations with Educatio and Emily Post.

Once we made the decision to homeschool, Emily Post chose to continue with providing our child, and other children in the community, with ongoing educational support. Our child met with Emily three times a week for two hours working on a business she had helped create with Emily. All on Emily's own time, she ensured that our child was honored and continued to receive care, guidance, and celebration, as well as education. Our child is currently above grade level and this is all due to the education she received from Educatio and the continued safe space that Emily provided.

Emily Post has demonstrated year after year a true commitment to providing not only high quality education, but honoring each child's individual needs. My child feels seen and heard with Emily Post and at Educatio and I hope that she continues to be a part of the education in this community, as the children in this community need the champion that Emily is. The other

issue I would like to speak to is the accusation that school was often cancelled. I can say with confidence that the only time school was cancelled was when the teachers all lived in Bozeman during the 2022-2023 school year, and the snow was so bad that they could not drive the pass. School cancellations actually never occurred. Our family could always depend on Education to be open and thriving.

Our family is in full support of this Charter status. We stand by the values of this school and Emily Post and know that with Charter status, more children can have the amazing opportunity our child has had and so many children in this community desperately need this level of education as an option.

Alexandria Saunders, PHD and Kevin Saunders

January 12, 2025

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Public Education,

I am writing to express my opposition to the charter application for the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) in Livingston, Montana. I am a Livingston resident with three children in the Livingston public schools, grades 1, 5, and 8. I have significant concerns regarding the potential impact the adoption of this application would have on our existing schools and on the larger community.

The Livingston public schools are already facing significant budget challenges. In recent years, our school district has been forced to make many difficult decisions due to budget shortfalls and declining enrollments. A beloved early childhood campus had to close, forcing the consolidation of pre-K and Kindergarten classes with the first and second grade school. As the parent of a Kindergartner, I can list many impacts this closure had on our family. One impact was that the afterschool program was consolidated into a third location across town, causing the youngest learners to take a bus at the end of their long day, and causing the waitlists for the afterschool program to grow. In addition to the campus closure, our high school cannot afford to purchase computers for students, all schools have cut arts programming, and last year, multiple middle school teachers' contracts were not renewed, leading to teachers instructing in subjects for which they have no specific training or expertise. Having a new charter school competing for funds, teachers, administrators, and parents will exacerbate our existing shortage of resources.

I also have concerns about the governance structure of YES. The Livingston School Board voted unanimously not to adopt their petition. This means that, should YES be allowed, it would operate with little to no local oversight. I fear that disconnect would do a disservice to our community. In a small community such as ours, public schools are one place where we are often forced to come together and overcome our differences. Our country is becoming increasingly polarized, with people retreating to their own circles of like-minded friends and family instead of discussing differences of opinions with neighbors and community members. Our community has faced many tough issues recently, and school board members have done a remarkable job of listening to all perspectives and making decisions they feel are in the best interest of our students.

I would like to note that I think the petitioners have good intentions with this application, and I am a supporter of the Montessori approach, especially individualized learning plans. If our school district were not facing declining enrollment and budget shortfalls, I would not be so strongly opposed to the formation of a new school option.

For these reasons, I urge the Montana Board of Public Education to reject the YES charter application. I believe that our focus should remain on strengthening our existing public schools to ensure all students have access to a high-quality education.

Sincerely,

*Grace Stephens*  
Grace Stephens

Amy Zanoni, Ph.D.  
225 S 9<sup>th</sup> St Livingston, MT 59047  
amyzanoni@gmail.com

January 19, 2025

Montana Board of Public Education  
bpe@mt.gov

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Public Education:

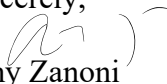
I am writing to express my opposition to the charter application for the Yellowstone Experience School (YES) in Livingston, Montana. As a Livingston resident, taxpayer, and parent, I have significant concerns regarding the impact that the adoption of this proposal would have on Livingston public schools and educational disparities in our community.

If established, YES would siphon funds from the public schools that serve the vast majority of our community's children—at a time when declining enrollments, tight budgets, and high housing costs have already undermined our district's ability to hire educators and make other financial decisions required to provide quality education.

What's more, YES would likely attract students from more educated, higher-income backgrounds and as a result, worsen educational inequalities in our community.

I admire YES's commitment to "individualized and meaningful learning opportunities." All students deserve such an approach. With that in mind, I encourage the Board to **oppose** YES's proposal. And I encourage the community members currently involved in YES to redirect their energies toward improving the quality of education offered in our existing public schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
  
Amy Zanoni



LIVINGSTON  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Eldon C. Johnson, Superintendent  
129 River Drive Livingston, MT. 59047 (406)222-0861  
[www.livingston.k12.mt.us](http://www.livingston.k12.mt.us)

---

January 22, 2025

TO: Montana Board of Public Education  
From: Livingston Public Schools  
Re: YES Charter School Application

Dear Montana Board of Public Education Members,

Thank you for all of the hard work and dedication you provide to the students, staff, communities, LEAs and SEA throughout the state of Montana. Livingston Public Schools is providing this written notice of our concerns and questions regarding the potential creation of a new charter school within our District. Please review the following, thank you very much!

### **A Letter Urging Denial of the Yellowstone Experience School Charter Proposal**

The proposed Yellowstone Experience School (YES) charter application appears to have followed guidelines in Montana House Bill 549 for submission first through a public school district, and then, after denial by that local school board, via direct application to the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE). The application before the BPE contains revisions that were not in the original application delivered to the trustees of Livingston Public Schools Districts 4 and 1 (LPS); however, the issues that formed the basis of the rejection of the application by LPS trustees remain in the revised application. Our concerns are that the YES charter is not necessary, would not be efficacious, and would create unfair or discriminatory treatment among public school students. While we value innovation in education, the proposed YES charter is also fiscally inefficient and unsustainable and is redundant with LPS offerings.

### **Redundancy in Educational Innovation**

The YES charter school applicants state that they prioritize project-based, place-based, and inquiry-based learning—approaches already embedded in Livingston Public Schools, and for which LPS has long received accolades. From stream studies to science fairs, performance arts to Career and Technical Education courses, job-shadowing to internship and work-based learning, LPS provides diverse, hands-on, and inquiry-driven opportunities across all grade levels. LPS offers a diverse range of courses that are the envy of many similar-sized schools. Additionally, years ago, out of desire that it be more place- and project-based, the District revised its social studies curricula to start at the earliest grades understanding one's home, school, town, then, at upper levels, state, country, and world. The long-standing LPS stream study curriculum has found its way statewide and back Livingston in the form of the Ripple hands-on watershed study curriculum which demonstrates ongoing commitment to place- and project-based learning.

Proponents of YES argue it offers something unique, yet their model largely mirrors LPS programs. For instance, Livingston schools already emphasize self-directed and experiential learning in early grades and maintain a blend of multidisciplinary and subject-specific instruction across all levels. Charter schools should provide genuinely innovative solutions, not replicate existing practices at a higher cost to taxpayers.



LIVINGSTON  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Eldon C. Johnson, Superintendent  
129 River Drive Livingston, MT. 59047 (406)222-0861  
[www.livingston.k12.mt.us](http://www.livingston.k12.mt.us)

---

### **Fairness Concerns and Discriminatory Practices**

The proposed 10:1 student-to-teacher ratio at YES starkly contrasts the 20:1 or higher ratios in public schools across Montana. This disparity raises troubling questions about equal access to free, appropriate, public education. If public resources fund YES, can the BPE justify offering smaller class sizes and greater individualized attention to a select group of public school students while the majority living in the same attendance area remain in larger classes?

Furthermore, YES's open enrollment model, which operates on a first-come, first-served basis, fails to address whether it will serve the students most in need of smaller group instruction. It risks becoming an exclusive option, disproportionately benefiting families with the time, good fortune, and resources to navigate the application process. Such exclusivity undermines the principle of free, appropriate (fair), public education.

### **Financial Unsustainability**

The financial implications of YES's proposed model are staggering. With a projected enrollment of just 70 students and first-year costs of \$5 million, YES would spend over \$71,000 per student—approximately the salary of a teacher in Livingston Public Schools. Even with state funding formulas, which might bring in \$1 million annually, maintaining the advertised teacher salaries and student-teacher ratios is implausible without significant private fundraising or reallocating resources from existing schools.

Additionally, the proposal lacks clarity on critical budgetary and operational issues. How will YES address special education needs, comply with Child Find requirements, ~~or~~ and handle fluctuating enrollment? These missing components indicate the lack of a viable and effective plan.

### **Unsupportable Claims Regarding Behavioral Health Solutions**

YES points to social emotional challenges facing today's youth and makes broad claims about those issues being related to limited options available in public schools. This minimizes the complexity of behavioral health work in dangerous ways. Suicidality, depression, and other mental health issues typically have far deeper causes than simply the coursework or learning style the student experiences, and recovery is generally far more complicated than a shift toward learning at one's own pace or via hands-on inquiry. All educators wish for silver-bullet solutions to complex problems, but the reality of behavioral health recovery is that it's complicated, and requires comprehensive, school and community solutions. Livingston has long been a leader in working with community partners to develop school-based behavioral health. For instance, the Rural Behavioral Health Institute's Screening Linked to Care program, now implemented statewide and in other states, had its beginnings in Livingston schools. We must remain skeptical about quick fix claims.

### **Concerns Regarding Certification, Accreditation, and Governance**

The YES charter proposes to utilize uncertified individuals in its administration and an appointed, rather than elected, Board of Trustees. Approval would establish a condition wherein accreditation and legal statute would be required of LPS, but not of YES.



LIVINGSTON  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Eldon C. Johnson, Superintendent  
129 River Drive Livingston, MT. 59047 (406)222-0861  
[www.livingston.k12.mt.us](http://www.livingston.k12.mt.us)

---

### **Inadequacies Found within Requirements as Established by HB0549**

There are several components of Section 5, Public Charter School Proposal Process, that seem to be lacking in regard to complete and detailed responses...those include the following:

- Section 3 Part d – grades to be served
- Section 3 Part f(i) – significant community support
- Section 3 Part f(i)C – a legal description of the property of the existing school district (unclear what this means)
- Section 3 Part g – background information on the governing board and leadership/management team
- Section 3 Part k – plan for identifying and successfully serving students with disabilities
- Section 3 Part v – plans for food services and ancillary services
- Section 3 Part y-dd – detailed startup plan with budgets, fiscal preparation, insurance, etc.
- Section 5 ALL – demonstration of competence in completing detailed explanation of all criteria with an emphasis on heavily weighing the evidence of community support, projected enrollment and approve charters whose promise of improved educational outcomes outweighs potential increased costs to state and local taxpayers
- Section 7 Part a – recreating DISTRICT boundaries of both the charter and the public school district; what does this mean and how does it impact LPS if the charter is approved? DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT THERE IS NO PROCEDURE, ULTIMATLEY NO ABILITY TO PRE-DETERMINE what this does to the local District.

### **Broader Implications for Montana Education**

Approval of YES sets a dangerous precedent, opening the door for other private entities to rebrand as public charters and draw resources away from traditional public schools. If YES succeeds in creating a publicly funded model of a private school, other organizations may follow, leading to the fragmentation of public education and increased competition for limited funds. Instead of strengthening the existing system, such a move could exacerbate inequalities and divert resources from schools serving the majority of Montana's students. Related, to approve the YES charter application now, and not any future identical one for a school of a different name, would raise claims of discrimination. Approval of the YES charter is tantamount to approval of public funding for all private schools.

### **Concurrence with the Board of Public Education Scoring**

LPS agrees with BPE conclusions via its charter school application scoring rubric. The YES application fails to demonstrate clear and convincing proof of the likelihood of success. The school's governance is inconsistent with a high-quality charter. The proposed business model demonstrates lack of experience with Montana school finance. The likelihood that a school without a facility and in need of 5 million dollars extra funding can open and operate is minimal.



LIVINGSTON  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Eldon C. Johnson, Superintendent  
129 River Drive Livingston, MT. 59047 (406)222-0861  
[www.livingston.k12.mt.us](http://www.livingston.k12.mt.us)

---

### **The Way Forward**

LPS has a proven track record of providing innovative and inclusive education. Rather than diverting public funds to an unworkable charter school, stakeholders should focus on enhancing and expanding programs in the existing public school. This approach ensures that all students benefit from improvements, not just a select few.

The YES charter proposal clearly indicates interest and energy among some Livingston stakeholders for a particular kind of educational experience. LPS welcomes such ideas and regularly partners with individuals and groups who wish to advance their ideas. However, as we have indicated, the YES charter proposal is neither necessary nor sufficient to create the conditions for the kind of educational innovation its authors intend.

Montana should invest in strengthening existing public schools, where certified educators already work tirelessly to innovate and serve all students.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Penn Cox, LPS Student Services Dir.

Eldon C. Johnson, LPS Supt.

Todd Wester, LPS Curr/Assessment Dir.



Dr. Chris Pavlovich, PhD  
105 S. 8th Street  
Livingston, MT 59047  
[cpavlovich@mtech.edu](mailto:cpavlovich@mtech.edu)  
January 21, 2025

Board of Public Education  
Montana Office of Public Instruction  
1301 E. 6th Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed Yellowstone Experience School (YES) Charter in Livingston, Montana. As a member of the community, an educator, and former Livingston 5th grade teacher, I believe it is crucial to carefully consider the implications of introducing a new charter school in our area.

My experience in public and higher education for 17 years, served in Livingston and in 58 communities in Montana, has given me a deep understanding of school system structures and functions across the state. I do believe it's possible for charter schools to support communities and provide unique opportunities. However, in the case of YES, it is my professional opinion that these goals, strategies for their implementation, or the implications have weighed for how they may support and complement public schools and the community. I was in attendance for YES's first presentation to our local school board. I have read their proposal, and I am bringing evidence as to why this charter should not receive approval to move forward. Below I have outlined such evidence:

#### Financial Implications and Resource Allocation

Our district and community are currently navigating fiscal constraints, necessitating prudent resource allocation. The recent rejection of a technology levy in our high school district underscores the challenges in securing funding. Introducing a new charter district would further fragment our limited resources, exacerbating the existing difficulties in securing essential funds for our schools and students. Furthermore, the Yellowstone Experience School's proposal to purchase a previously closed school building raises concerns. The closure of this facility was not solely due to declining enrollment, but also the significant capital improvements required to address its deteriorated condition. It would be fiscally irresponsible to transfer ownership without thorough evaluation and approval from our board and superintendent. The Yellowstone Experience School charter's assumption that they can acquire the building without proper authorization and consideration of the associated costs is troubling and warrants careful examination.

#### Educational Access

The Yellowstone Experience School's (YES) application and presentations reveal a concerning lack of clarity regarding support services for students with disabilities. Providing adequate resources and accommodations for students with diverse needs is essential for ensuring access for all students in education. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds, who comprise a significant portion of our student population, often rely heavily on schools to provide critical support services. Their families may face significant barriers in accessing additional resources outside of school, making it imperative that our educational institutions prioritize providing comprehensive services that address the unique needs of these students. I am concerned that YES's proposed model may not adequately address the needs of students with disabilities, potentially exacerbating existing needs in our community. Furthermore, the proposed compensation structure, which offers higher salaries in exchange for extended work hours, may inadvertently create barriers to hiring and retaining teachers from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds. It is essential that YES provides a comprehensive plan outlining how they will provide adequate support services for students with disabilities, as well as strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching staff.

#### Accountability Standards

Holding all educational institutions, including charter schools, to the same rigorous standards of accountability and transparency is crucial. My understanding is that charter schools may not be subject to the same level of standardized testing as public schools. If this exemption were to apply to Montana charters, such as the proposed Yellowstone Experience School (YES), it would create an uneven playing field for students and schools.

#### Community Input

While Yellowstone Experience School (YES) has solicited community feedback, they have not taken the opportunity to explore whether their proposed initiatives are already being addressed within our public schools. Unfortunately, supporters of YES seem to be either uninformed about the exceptional work being done in our district or hold outdated perceptions based on past experiences. In reality, our schools have undergone significant transformations and improvements over the past decade. Notably, our early childhood literacy program has become a state model, and our work-based learning initiatives at the middle and high school levels have garnered statewide recognition.

At Sleeping Giant Middle School, we at Ripple have partnered with teachers and administration to launch deep, inquiry-based, place-based learning through the EcosySTEM framework. This collaboration, facilitated by Montana Tech University, empowers students to develop a deeper understanding of their local environment and its interconnected systems.

It's also important to acknowledge the lasting legacy of Watershed Warriors in our school district. This program has inspired a generation of students to become stewards of their local environment, and its impact continues to be felt. All of this has been done with the support of the community, seeking resources for projects in a fiscally-responsible manner. It would be unfortunate to divert enrollment, faculty, and funding to a new charter school whose plan, while ambitious, lacks a clear understanding of our district's strengths and accomplishments.

I appreciate your time and consideration of these matters as the board deliberates on the future of the Yellowstone Experience Charter School. I urge you to prioritize the needs of our existing public schools and the students they serve.

Sincerely,

*Christina Pavlovich*

Chris Pavlovich, PhD

Director of Program Services and Evaluation

Ripple: The Center for Education and Ecosystem Studies

January 21, 2025

Dear Board of Public Education of Montana,

I am writing to express concerns about the proposed charter school, Yellowstone Experiential School, in Livingston and its potential impact on our existing public school system.

In a small town like ours, where student enrollment is already limited, introducing a charter school would significantly reduce funding for our public school. Since school funding is allocated on a per-student basis, each student who transfers to the charter school would take their associated funding with them, potentially forcing our public school to operate with a reduced budget. The Livingston Public School system is already operating on a very fragile budget with many cuts having taken place over the past several years.

This reduction in funding could trigger a downward spiral. With fewer resources, our public school may need to cut specialized programs, reduce staff, or eliminate extracurricular activities. These cuts would likely prompt more families to consider the charter school, further depleting enrollment and funding. Additionally, our most engaged families might be the first to leave, affecting parent involvement and volunteer support that our public school relies on.

Our current public school has served as a cornerstone of community unity for generations. Creating a parallel school system risks dividing our small community and weakening the social bonds that make our town special. Unlike larger urban areas where multiple school systems can coexist, our town's limited population means we risk undermining the viability of our existing school without necessarily gaining additional educational benefits.

Livingston has several small private schools in addition to the outlying rural public schools (Pine Creek, Arrowhead, and Shields Valley) which are options for families already. Adding in the public charter school, YES, would not only stress the Livingston Public Schools, but these aforementioned schools as well.

I support charter schools in communities that have the population base to support multiple, thriving and engaging schools which offer varied curriculum to meet the needs of different students. Our community does not currently have the population base to successfully support additional schools and to have them all thrive.

Sincerely,

Holly Sienkiewicz, RN

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Holly Sienkiewicz". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the printed name.

Livingston School District Nurse and parent of 3 children who have attended Livingston Public Schools

# Yellowstone Experience School

January 24, 2025

Emily Post





# THE YES PROPOSAL

To establish an alternative K-12 charter school that integrates academics with meaningful real-world projects, where students explore and engage with their local environment and culture, connecting learning to Park County's unique history, geography, and community.







PG 3

# THE NEED



- **Declining Public School Enrollment**
  - 23% of Park County students opted out of public schools in 2023, continuing the decline since 2005.
- **Low Academic Proficiency**
  - Fewer than half of Park County Students are Proficient in English Language Arts and Math Core Content
- **Low and Declining Commitment to School**
  - Over 76% of 8th, 10th, & 12th grade students in Park County reported low commitment to school in 2020 , a 20% increase in disengagement from 2016 MT PNA Survey Reports
- **High Rates of Depression**
  - 19% of PC Students seriously considered suicide in 2023, MT YRBS<sup>1</sup>

# THE OPPORTUNITY



## ENGAGEMENT

YES offers a hands-on approach to learning through real-world, meaningful projects, led by highly trained, supported teachers.



## CULTURE

YES Strives to Encourage Student Empowerment, Curiosity, and Determination Through Staff Modeling and Curriculum in Combination with Strong Parent and Community Support



## COMMUNITY

YES Students Build Skills, Knowledge, and Character Through Community Partnerships, Reaching Mutual goals.



# Building Capacity, Getting Results

**GOAL:** Academic, Social, & Developmental Foundation of Skills & Knowledge

**APPROACH:** Effective, Well-trained, Supported, Prepared, & Aligned Teachers

**EVIDENCE-BASED PARTNER:**



**GOAL:** Healthy, Empowered, Resilient Student Mindset

**APPROACH:** Staff Training and Curriculum Delivery for Intentional, Effective Culture

**EVIDENCE-BASED PARTNER:**



**GOAL:** Student Connection and Commitment to School and Local Community

**APPROACH:** Meaningful, Real-world Projects with Local Community Members

**EVIDENCE-BASED PARTNER:**

**PG 5**



# BUDGET - OPERATIONAL COSTS

Cost per  
student:

YES Full  
Enrollment

\$11,700

MT State Ave  
2022/23

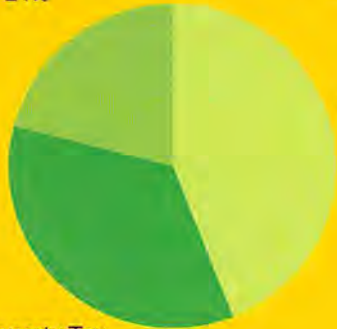
\$13,346

	Yellowstone Experience School				
Base Case	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5
Enrollment	130	250	390	390	390
Operations					
Teachers/ Administration/ STEAM Elective Professionals	\$1,864,250	\$2,867,625	\$3,783,750	\$3,897,263	\$4,014,180
Technology Fee	\$71,218	\$73,355	\$75,555	\$77,822	\$80,156
Field Study (transportation, admissions, program fees)	\$151,500	\$156,045	\$156,045	\$56,275	\$57,964
Professional Development	\$38,304	\$39,453	\$40,636	\$41,855	\$43,111
Facilities	\$84,460	\$86,994	\$89,604	\$92,292	\$95,060
Contingency 10%	\$266,523	\$330,628	\$407,892	\$420,129	\$432,733
Total Use	\$2,476,254	\$3,554,100	\$4,553,482	\$4,585,636	\$4,723,205

# BUDGET - FUNDING

YES

Non-Tax Revenue  
21%

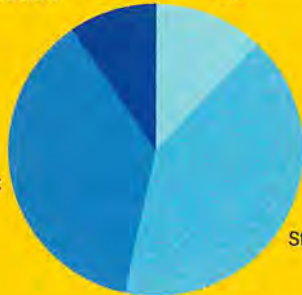


State Funding  
44%

Local Property Tax  
35%

MT Ave

Non-Tax Funds 9.6%



Federal Funding  
12%

Local Property Tax  
37%

State Funding  
41.3%

## Yellowstone Experience School

Base Case	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5
Enrollment	130	250	390	390	390
Sources of Funds					
State Base Aid	\$426,254	\$439,042	\$452,213	\$465,780	\$479,753
Local Enrollment Tax Base	some if LSD kids enroll	\$1,857,381	\$2,869,654	\$2,955,744	\$3,044,416
State Additional Aid (Quality Educator, Etc)	0	\$216,325	\$271,019	\$279,149	\$287,524
Charter Growth Fund	\$750,000	0			
New Schools Fund	\$500,000	0			
Philanthropic Dollars	\$800,000	\$741,351	\$460,596	\$384,962	\$311,512
Innovation Tax Credit		200,000	300,000	300,000	300,000
Sustainable Revenue Through Business Partnerships		100,000	200,000	200,000	300,000
<b>Total Sources</b>	<b>\$2,476,255</b>	<b>\$3,554,099</b>	<b>\$4,553,482</b>	<b>\$4,585,635</b>	<b>\$4,723,205</b>



# TIMELINE



## Charter Approval

- Contract w / State of Montana



## Policy & Operations Plans

- Adopt Policies, Operations Plans, & Budget
- Secure Campus
- Contract w/ Professional Development



## Community Outreach

- Communication with Stakeholders and Parents
- Recruit Community, Parent & Student Advisory Committees



## Fundraising

- Continue Grant-Writing
- Investor Outreach

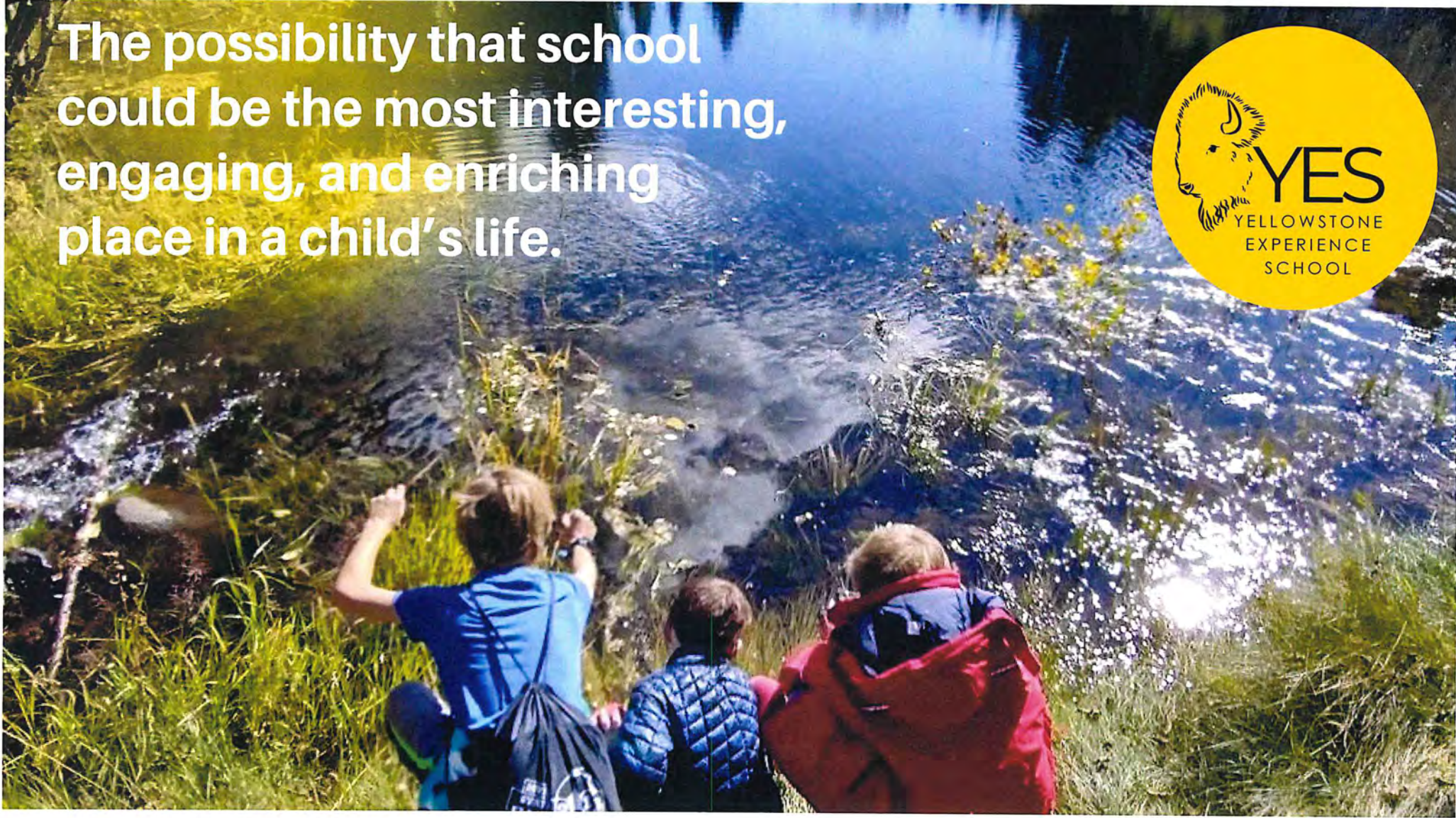


## Team

- Staff Outreach: Hiring, Training, Onboarding



The possibility that school  
could be the most interesting,  
engaging, and enriching  
place in a child's life.





# APPENDIX



# District Enrollment

2021-22

County-wide  
Public Schools total k-12: 1717  
Home school private school k-12: 407  
Livingston District: 1271  
**% of County non-public: 19.19**

2022-23

County-wide  
Public Schools total k-12: 1700  
Home school private school k-12: 431  
Livingston District k-12: 1255  
**% of County non-public: 20.22**

2023-24

County-wide  
Public Schools total k-12: 1595  
Home school private school k-12: 480  
Livingston District: 1138  
**% of County non-public: 23.13**

# Public Alternative Trends



- 46 states have Charter School Laws
- Since 2005/06,
  - # of charter schools has Doubled
  - Charter Student enrollment has Tripled

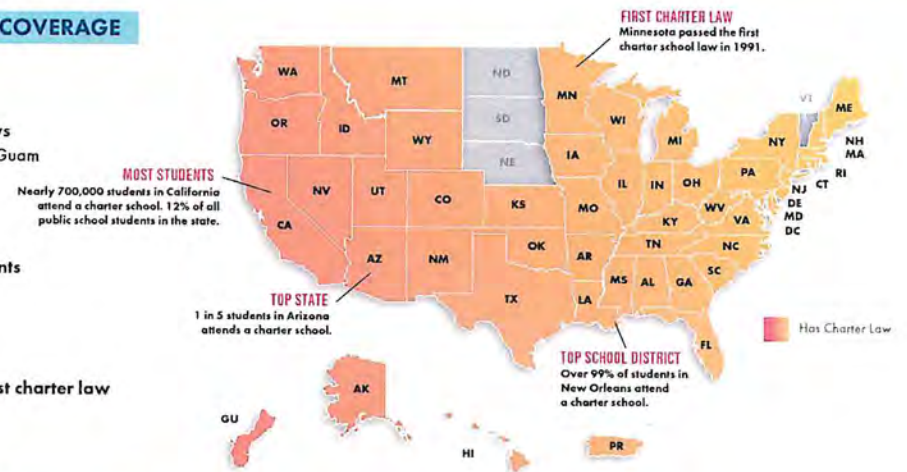
## 2023 DATA DIGEST CHARTER SCHOOLS OVERVIEW

### CHARTER SCHOOL COVERAGE

**46** STATES  
have Charter School Laws  
plus D.C., Puerto Rico, and Guam

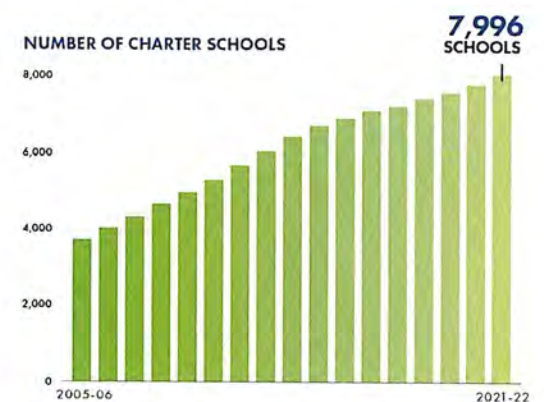
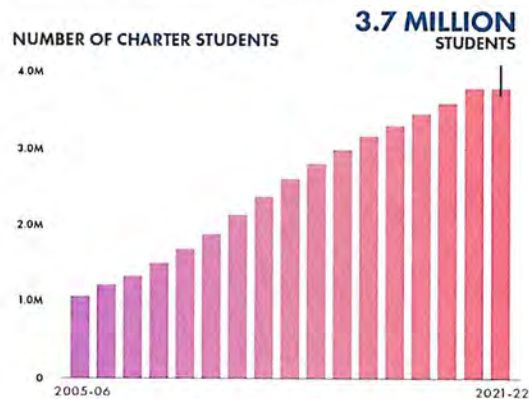
**7.4%**  
of all public school students  
attend a charter school

**+30** YEARS  
have passed since the first charter law  
was established.



### CHARTER SCHOOLS & STUDENTS

Since the 2005-06 school year, the number of charter schools and campuses has more than **DOUBLED**, while charter school enrollment has more than **TRIPLED**.

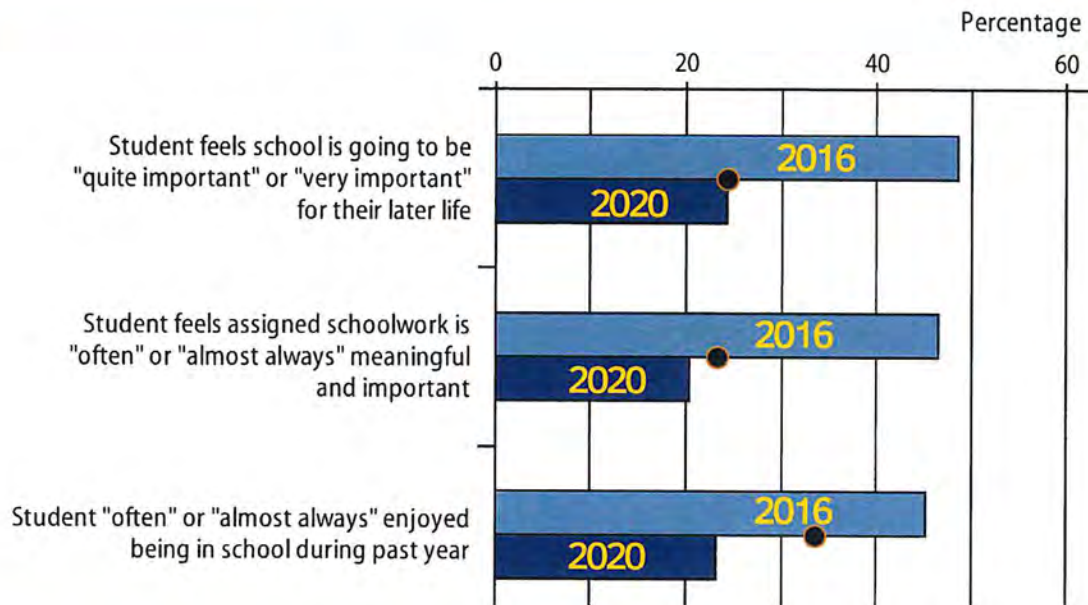






# WHY

## Park County: All grades data



March 2020, MT Prevention Needs Assessment.  
Students in grades 8, 10 & 12 participated from one of the County's public schools

Data from the 2020 MT PNA survey showed of PC 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students, 76 to 80% of students reported low commitment to school, down ~ 20% from 2016 student reports.

Young people who have lost this commitment to school are at higher risk for five of the six health & behavior problems. 2024 PC Community Assessment Report

We believe kids thrive in an inspiring and meaningful educational experience, not only to enjoy increased future opportunity, self confidence and empowerment; but to enjoy a healthy, engaged, and connected journey along the way.

# PARENT WANTS FOR ED ALTERNATIVE

ARTS & CREATIVITY

SAFE & SECURE  
ENVIRONMENT

ACCESSIBILITY &  
INCLUSIVITY

LIFELONG LEARNING

NATURE AND OUTDOOR  
EDUCATION

COMPREHENSIVE &  
FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT &  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT &  
CONNECTION

\*FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY  
SURVEYS, MTGS, LETTERS







# MISSION

Our mission is to empower students to  
build the knowledge, skills and character  
to succeed in life  
through a self-directed, hands-on, and  
experiential approach to learning.





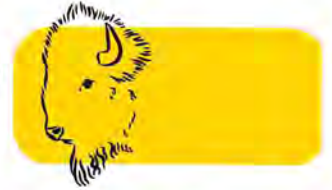
# VISION

YES students are deeply engaged with and  
invested in their own learning.

With a foundation of  
knowledge, strong sense of self, and  
connection to community -

YES public charter graduates are  
prepared for lifetime success and are  
empowered to live a life of well-being and  
productive citizenship.

# YES CONCEPT



## PROJECT-BASED:

A hands-on educational approach where students learn by actively engaging in real-world and meaningful projects that integrate multiple subjects and skills.

## MONTESSORI METHOD:

A student-centered educational approach emphasizing independence, hands-on learning, and collaborative play, guided by a prepared environment and trained educators.

## COMMUNITY SCHOOL:

A school that integrates academics with community services, fostering partnerships with local organizations to support student well-being and strengthen ties to the community.

## PLACE BASED:

Students explore and engage with their local environment and culture, connecting learning to the unique history, geography, and community where they live.

## STEM & TECHNICAL LEARNING PROJECTS:

Activities focused on science, technology, engineering, and math that teach practical, technical, and problem-solving skills for real-world applications and job/ careers.





# PRODUCING MEASURED LEARNING OUTCOMES



EXPERT TEACHER TRAINING & COACHING

INTERDISCIPLINARY, REAL-WORLD PROJECTS

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

YEAR-ROUND SCHEDULE

SMALL GROUP, MIXED-AGE  
CLASSROOMS

# WHY MONTESSORI?



## INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING PATHS

promotes love of learning  
and helps students achieve  
mastery in subjects at their  
own pace

## EMPHASIS ON...

- critical thinking
- problem-solving
- self-management skills

## WHOLE-CHILD DEVELOPMENT

nuture academics, social,  
emotional and practical life  
skills to develop well-  
rounded individuals

## PREPARE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

support creativity, curiosity  
and exploration

## ALIGNMENT W/ PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL VALUES

Montessori is a proven, research-supported pedagogy that  
fosters academic achievement, social-emotional growth, and  
student agency - all within a structured framework that can  
meet state and national standards





# WHY PROJECT-BASED LEARNING?

## LEARN TO CLIMB ANY MOUNTAIN

*When kids learn and practice the design process, they learn to take any idea or dream -big or small- from start to finish.*



# Community Learning & Giving Back



## > Place-Based Learning in Action

### PCCF Community Priorities:

Landscape and Natural Amenities

*Rehabilitate Grazing Pasture w Native Grasses, Wildflowers,  
Hedgerows for Predator Habitat*



#### Writing / Humanities

- Historic Species - Museum of Rockies
- Native American Culture - Gateway Museum
- First Generation Ag Practices



#### Math

- Irrigation Styles & Metrics
- Water Sources
- Climate
- Water Conservation -
- Cost of Soil Amendments



#### Science

- Soil Health MT DNRC
- Native Plants- MSU Ext
- Habitat Conservation - Greater Yellowstone Coalition



#### STEM

- Rewinding - Knepp Farm UK
- Irrigation Innovation
- Native Drought Tolerant Species

# MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHEDULE



## 7-9 ARC FALL 2025 Project Flim Festival

Project Description: Students will work collaboratively to create films for the Missoula Big Sky Film Festival

<b>Monday/ Wednesday</b>							
<b>8:00 AM</b>	<b>9:00 AM</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>11:00 AM</b>	<b>12:00 PM</b>	<b>12:30</b>	<b>2:00 PM</b>	<b>3:00 PM</b>
Homeroom, check-in; planning; discussion prompt	Math 6/7	Math 7/8	Math 8/9	Lunch	Life Sports	Film score/ Music Appreciation	Film Creative Space
Homeroom, check-in; planning; discussion prompt	Literature, comprehension: History/ Biography	Literature: Humanities/ Current Events/ Media	Literature: Film/ Screenplays	Lunch	Life Sports	Film Creative Space	Costume/ Set Design
<b>Tuesday/ Thursday</b>							
<b>8:00 AM</b>	<b>9:00 AM</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>11:00 AM</b>	<b>12:00 PM</b>	<b>12:30</b>	<b>2:00 PM</b>	<b>3:00 PM</b>
Homeroom, check-in; planning; discussion prompt	Math 5/6	Math 6/7	Math 8/9	Lunch	Outdoor Ed	Photography/ Film	Photography/ Film
Homeroom, check-in; planning; discussion prompt	ELA Research Writing: documentary script	ELA: Creative Writing- drama movie script dialog/ narrative	ELA: Creative Writing, comedy skits	Lunch	Outdoor Ed	physical science	Creative maker space



- drought resistant
- high wildlife attributes

\$1,166

Types of Trees to Order (200)

1. Aspen  $\rightarrow \$2.05 \times 200 =$

2. Douglas Fir (E of Div)  $\rightarrow \$1.26 \times$

3. Lodgepole Pine  $\rightarrow \$1.26 \times 200 = 2$

4. Ponderosa (E of Div)  $\rightarrow \$1.26 \times 20$

Document our Fundraising Gr

410  
252  
252

## FILLING THE GAPS

### Comprehensive Coursework Available

To offer more course opportunities beyond those offered by our certified teaching staff, students may enroll in online classes through the MT Digital Academy. Created in 2009 by the Montana Legislature, MTDA is the state online program for Montana, supporting instruction for MT students in partnership with public schools across the state.

### Advanced Coursework

For students ready to take college courses, Montana State University offers a rich catalog of courses, developing college-level study habits, participating in study groups, developing bonds with professors, and conducting university-level research. It's a preview of college life, with the high school support network still in place.

- regenerative ranching/ agriculture
- coding, app development
- horseback riding/ pack trips
- fashion design
- electrical technician
- wildlife management
- archaeology
- teaching
- robotics
- metal and woodworking
- Film
- baking/ cooking

- solar installation
- ceramics
- plein air painting
- creative writing
- theater production
- photography
- yoga
- retail
- printing
- restaurant management
- engineering
- fly fishing/ guiding
- business management

# ELECTIVES

**We connect students with  
expert, community  
practitioners on and off  
campus for deep dives in the  
topics students are curious  
about**







# HIGH SCHOOL MODELS & SUPPORT

We understand that each stage of a student's education is critical to future success.

To help support YES high school programming and ensure that 9th-12th students receive an educational experience necessary to succeed in higher education or entry into the workforce, we are partnering with the following high school programs to inform and support years 1-3 of YES.



Paris Gibson Education Center is a school for students in Great Falls, Montana who have a desire to reach their goals somewhere other than their traditional high school.



Empowering students to be curious, kind, and resilient as they navigate their path to purpose.



Connecting the Classroom to the World-  
High Tech High is a project-based public charter in operation for over 20 years.

# TEACHER PROFILE

We ask teachers/ collaborators to think big, improvise, reiterate, have fun, and learn alongside students.

By combining best practices in project-based/ experiential learning and common core curriculum standards, YES aims to meet students' needs in a flexible, mixed-age environment that emphasizes real-world experiences that will engage kids with their community and natural environment.

## Responsibilities

Educatio is seeking experienced, certified candidates for the position of educator for the 25/26 academic school year.

The teacher/ collaborator will work with a team and be responsible for teaching direct instruction math; language arts curriculum; and/or mentoring and designing interdisciplinary projects for a group of 15-30 mixed-age students.

## Additional Teacher/ Collaborator Characteristics/ Skills

### Student Advocate

You have the experience or a desire to teach in a setting that honors the competence and independence of children. Candidate must be able to positively interact with ALL students.

### Experiential Learning Savvy

You have a deep understanding and value for inquiry-based education and are willing to continually learn new strategies to expand your artistry.

### Creative Curriculum Designer

You leverage student interests, relevant challenges and professional tools/ experts to design engaging interdisciplinary projects that drive engaged student learning.

### Social Justice and Equity Champion

You see opportunities all around you to leverage conversations about the value of individuality and actively seek to create equitable and inclusive learning spaces. You identify inequity and bullying and take the time to listen, increase understanding and strengthen relationships.

### Excellent Communicator

You communicate effectively with students, parents and coworkers. You actively listen, get curious and ask probing questions. You know how to be candid and kind at the same time. You can hold accountability and be supportive at the same time. You partner with students to create academic and developmental goals and measure achievement and progress through clear, narrative assessment with active student participation.

### Empathetic Leader

You put yourself in the shoes of students and parents and communicate in a way that values their lived experience.

### Project Manager

You have a strong work ethic and are able to help students pace out projects and create accountability structures that help them reach their goals.

### Confident with Ambiguity

You are intellectually curious and resourceful. You are comfortable not always having or knowing the answers.

### Great Collaborator

You enlist your problem solving, communication skills and fun personality to build strong relationships with colleagues, students and families. You know the importance of leveraging divergent viewpoints for the improvement of our collective work. You hold yourself, colleagues and students accountable, and you are receptive and humble when they hold you accountable. You have read and believe in the mission statement and embed this into every aspect of your work. You value teamwork and recognize the value of many contributing their skills towards a common goal.

### Lifelong learner

You have a growth mindset and you pick up new ideas quickly and think critically. You are intellectually curious and deeply committed to learning and growing.

# STAFFING PLAN



## OUTREACH

- Begin hiring outreach in January 2025 upon charter approval
- Promote competitive salary, FTE, and PTE positions available
- Promote professional development support, team teaching environment, and student to teacher ratio
- Promote PTE opportunities for community and field experts w/ OPI-approved certification process

## HIRING

- Create diverse, experienced hiring team
- Develop comprehensive application, interview, and demonstration of teaching methods process
- Thoroughly vet potential applicants for cultural fit and optimized student learning outcomes
- Provide background checks
- Validate certifications, support needed certs

## ONBOARDING

- Provide orientation
- Begin online training with YES structure and model
- Schedule summer professional development training





## YR 1 STAFFING BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS

- 2-FT TEACHERS/ 30 STUDENTS IN 4 LEARNING GROUPS 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12
- TRAINING, EXP, PASSION; ENGLISH, MATH, SCIENCES, MUSIC, ARTS
- ADDITIONAL CERT. TEACHERS:
  - MATH COACH, LITERACY COACH, STEAM LEAD, COMMUNITY PROJECT COORDINATOR, INTERNSHIP/ APPRENTICESHIP COORDINATOR, WELLNESS COACH, FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEAD, ENGLISH-LEARNER COACH
- AVE TEACHER SALARY \$87,250 W/ BENEFITS- BILLINGS DIST RATE (\$69,000 SALARY + \$18,250 BENEFITS)
- ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
  - 2 ADMINISTRATORS
  - 1 HR
  - 2 OFFICE STAFF
  - 1 FACILITIES
  - 2 CUSTODIAL
  - .5 LIBRARY
  - 1 IT
  - 2 ACCOUNTING
  - 1 INDEPENDENT PROFICIENCY EVALUATION CONTR.
  - PARENT COMMUNICATION DIR.



# YR 1 BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS

## REVENUES

- 3% INCREASE ON BUDGET ITEMS EACH YEAR
- 3% INCREASE ON ANB FROM 2023 RATE
- 3% INCREASE/ YR ON BASE AID

## EXPENDITURES

- ~\$80K FOR DE-CENTRALIZED, MULTIPLE CAMPUSES FOR AGRICULTURAL, STEAM, & CIVICS LEARNING
- 9 FT LEAD TEACHERS/ 4 MONTESSORI CERT-ALL STATE CERT FOR 130 KIDS
- ~\$40K PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BUDGET FOR SEL, MONTESSORI, & PROJECT-BASED LEARNING
- \$100K TRANSPORTATION BUDGET FOR 2 PASSENGER VANS PER YEAR
- ~\$50K TECHNOLOGY BUDGET
- BUDGET DOES NOT INCLUDE: FOOD PROGRAM



# YES PROFORMA: FUNDRAISING SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS



		Sources of Funds				
		-10%	-5%	Base Case	5%	10%
Uses of Funds	-10%	0	\$292,421	\$584,842	\$877,263	\$1,169,684
	-5%	(-\$292,421)	0	\$292,421	\$584,842	\$877,263
	Base Case	(-\$584,842)	(-\$292,421)	0	\$292,421	\$584,842
	5%	(-\$877,263)	(-\$584,842)	(-\$292,421)	0	\$292,421
	10%	(-\$1,169,684)	(-\$877,263)	(-\$584,842)	(-\$292,421)	0



# \$5,900,000 FUNDRAISING PLAN

## YR 1

- 2 specific charter Startup grants totaling \$1,250,000, more available
- Donations from Patrons Who Recognize Investment in Community Through Alt Public Ed Option \$800,000

## YRS 2-5

- Create and Establish Investment Sustainable Revenue for YES Education
- State Innovative Education Tax Credits
- Technology Bond
- Business Sponsorships to Support Apprenticeships



# PARK COUNTY FINANCIAL IMPACT



- **NET GAIN IN EDUCATION DOLLARS FOR COUNTY**
- 2023/24 LOSS OF REV FOR 480 KIDS UNENROLLED IN PUBLIC DISTRICTS = \$2,861,760 @ 2023 K-6TH ANB RATE OF \$5962
- 44.7% OF ANB FUNDS COME FROM LOCAL TAX BASE
- I.E. 2026 PC TAX PAYERS WILL PAY 44.7% OF ANB= \$830,248 W/ 260 ADD. ANB
- 80% BASE ENTITLEMENT FROM STATE:
  - K-6 = \$48,585
  - 7-8 = \$94,342
  - 9-12 = \$283,326
  - TOTAL ED REVENUE FROM STATE: \$426,253 + 55% OF \$2,3,4 MILLION IN ANB FUNDS FROM STATE EACH YEAR, FY 26-FY27, RESPECTIVELY
- 20% BASE ENTITLEMENT FROM PC, THROUGH PERMISSIVE OR OPERATIONS LEVIES TO REACH MAX BUDGET
- ROB WATSON SUPERINTENDENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS OF MONTANA
- AUTUMN BELMONT, OPI

When reimagining education- we must design with the audience and beneficiaries in mind- children and communities.

Creating relevant, and lasting educational outcomes mustn't compromise the process; neglecting the needs, nature, and priorities of kids: a voracious exploration of new materials, places, people, information, stories, and ideas; in a safe, playful, social, inclusive, and positive environment- building true self esteem and confidence through meaningful experiences, challenges, and goals.

The Yellowstone Experience School combines direct instruction to build content knowledge with hands-on projects and real-world experience.





THANK YOU



## The Main Print Shop

---

**From:** NewSchools Applications <applications@newschools.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 7, 2025 1:46 PM  
**To:** emily@educatio.life  
**Subject:** Application for NewSchools 2025 funding opportunity received!

Dear Emily :

Thank you for submitting your application for the NewSchools 2025 Funding Opportunity. We are excited to learn more about your idea. Your application number is **R-007902-2024** .

Applicants will receive an update on the status of their application by March 2025 and funding decisions by June 2025. Funding will be disbursed in the summer of 2025.

Please [click here](#) to complete a quick 5-minute survey on the application process. Your feedback is incredibly valuable and helps us develop a positive applicant experience.

Sincerely,

The NewSchools Team



## The Main Print Shop

---

**From:** Mabel Lajes-Guiteras <mlajesguiteras@chartergrowthfund.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 20, 2024 2:32 PM  
**To:** Mabel Lajes-Guiteras  
**Subject:** 2025 CSGF Application for First Schools Update- Action Requested

Hello,

Thank you for applying to the 2025 CSGF Cycle. We are pleased to share that you have moved on to the next round in our process. In this round, you will complete a video interview via Spark Hire platform. The video is due 1/6 at 11:59 pm MT. Please note that the Spark Hire platform will show the due date and time in your time zone.

A few tips:

- Find a quiet spot to record your interview
- Be sure you have a STRONG internet connection (if you do not, it may not record your answers in their entirety)

Here is the link for the interview:

<https://hire.li/1Wh8fK7kTW1GYXM0-QV9F>

We look forward to reviewing your submission.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me.

Have a wonderful day,  
Mabel

## CUSTOMIZED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCOPE OF WORK AND COST PROPOSAL

**Yellowstone Experience School of Livingston, Montana  
2025-26**

Two (2) High Tech High Graduate School Education (HTH GSE) Professional Learning Designers will facilitate both in person and online professional development for up to fifteen (15) educators of Yellowstone Experience School of Livingston, Montana. The purpose of these workshops is to support educators in further developing their PBL instructional and design practices around the HTH Design for Deeper Learning Essentials. These sessions will be facilitated in the 2025-2026 school year and will be held in person and via Zoom to support project design.

Professional Development Training and/or Fee Description	Estimated Amount
<p><b>PBL Design Camp at HTH Graduate School of Education, San Diego, CA</b> June 16-18, 2025</p> <p>PBL Design Camp is three (3) days of workshops designed around building capacity for PBL design, facilitation, and deeper learning pedagogies. Educators will design a culturally responsive PBL project to put into practice in their classroom. Each workshop will focus on essential components of PBL Design. Facilitators will model and explicitly identify critical pedagogical and facilitation moves for a PBL lesson plan. These workshops will introduce educators to essential elements of Project Based Learning and design that focuses on equitable structures and strategies.</p> <p><i>*PBL Design Camp discounted pricing for Professional Learning continuous partners is \$1050/participant.</i></p>	\$15,750
<p><b>Coaching for Deeper Learning</b> August 2025, September 2025, October 2025, November 2025, December 2025, January 2026, February 2026, April 2026, May 2026, June 2026</p> <p>1 HTH GSE Professional Learning Designer will design and facilitate one (1) coaching session per month during the 2024-25 school year. Each session will model a protocol to be used to foster collegial discussion and co-creation during PD.</p> <p>The Grade Level Representative Team of four (4) teachers will meet online for 90 minutes.</p> <p>Coaching Fee = \$75/hr/person Grade Level Representative Team = 4 people \$75 x 1.5 hours x 4 people = \$450 \$450 x 10 sessions = \$4,500</p>	\$4,500
<b>Coaching DESIGN FEE</b>	<b>\$4,800</b>

For each hour of facilitation there is one (1) hour of design and preparation.  \$320/hr x 15 of hrs of facilitation = \$4,800	
<b>Customized Immersion at High Tech High in San Diego, CA</b> December 2025  One (1) HTH GSE Professional Learning Designer will design and facilitate a customized tour and professional development experience for 3 days in December 2025 (dates TBD).  These learning experiences will include tours of transformative learning spaces, conversations with HTH leadership, educators, specialists and students, classroom embeddings (observations) and deep dives into essential elements of Project Based Learning and design that focus on equitable structures and strategies that support deeper learning and teaching.  5 Participants x \$350 x 3 days = \$5,250	\$5,250
<b>Customized Immersion DESIGN FEE</b> For each hour of facilitation there is one (1) hour of design and preparation.  \$320/hr x 18 of hrs of facilitation = \$5,760	\$5,760
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$36,060</b>

#### OPTIONAL Additional Professional Learning Opportunities

Any participating cohort members may join these sessions at a discounted rate.

Professional Development Training and/or Fee Description
<u><a href="#">Online Project Unpacking</a></u> <b>Monthly: 9/25, 10/25, 11/25, 12/25, 1/26, 2/26, 3/26 4/26, 5/26</b> In these interactive 2-hr. Online sessions, HTH educators share the story of an exemplary project from inspiration to exhibition. Participants will practice elements of the HTH Kaleidoscope of Essentials with opportunities to design for their own context.  <b>Cost: **\$75/participant/session</b> **Discounted rate of 50%  <u><a href="#">PBL in Action</a></u> <b>HTH GSE and <a href="#">Habla Teacher Institute</a> Collaboration</b> <b>Date TBD</b> <b>Location: High Tech High Graduate School of Education, San Diego, CA</b> Be immersed in a HTH project slice experience. In this offering, our team models collaboration with progressive educators that are leading the way in equity, STEAM/STEM, literacy, and arts integration. Participants will practice a set of instructional practices and design principles for bringing project-based learning to your classroom. Join to build community with other practitioners through SEL strategies foundational to PBL.  <b>Cost: ***\$1250/participant</b> ***Discounted from \$1500/participant



## **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

Between

**Institute for Self-Directed Learning**

and

**Yellowstone Experience School (YES)**

**Effective Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

### **I. Purpose**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") establishes a collaborative relationship between the Institute for Self-Directed Learning ("the Institute") and Yellowstone Experience School ("YES") to support the founding and leadership development of YES through coaching services provided to its "Leadership Team" (YES Board of Directors, Administrative Team, Parent Advisory Committee Liaison, and Community Advisory Liaison.)

---

### **II. Background**

#### **Belief in YES's Founding and Leadership**

- The Institute recognizes Yellowstone Experience School (YES) as an innovative model poised to redefine education in Livingston through its mission to empower students, embrace community engagement, and blend self-directed and experiential learning.
- Emily Post has demonstrated exemplary leadership during her participation in The New School Models Design Lab, successfully iterating the YES school blueprint with clarity, creativity, and determination. Her proactive engagement and thoughtful approach highlight her readiness in a leadership role to support YES to success.

#### **Expertise of the Institute's Consultants**

Dr. Tyler Thigpen and Dr. Caleb Collier, leaders of the Institute, bring extensive expertise in supporting school founders and innovators. Their experience includes:

- Co-founding and governing successful public and private charter schools, including The Forest School, The Forest School Online, and Chattahoochee Hills Charter School.
- Achieving sustained 39.75% annual growth at The Forest School since 2018 and maintaining the largest waiting list among Georgia charter schools at Chattahoochee Hills Charter School.
- Raising \$7M for school facilities, ensuring financial solvency, and securing accreditation across multiple schools.
- Guiding 200+ school leaders and 25+ school founders through successful launches and redesigns.

- Publishing globally recognized work on self-directed learning, school leadership, and character education.

Their tailored consulting packages are designed to create thriving, innovative, and financially sustainable learning environments. A list of Institute clients and testimonials can be found [here](#).

---

### III. Scope of Collaboration

The Institute agrees to provide the following tailored coaching and consulting services to the YES Leadership Team:

1. **Leadership Capacity Audit and Needs Assessment**
    - Evaluate current leadership strengths and identify areas for growth.
  2. **Goals and Mission Strategy Assessment**
    - Refine YES's goals and mission for strategic clarity and alignment.
  3. **Team Unification and Vision Clarity**
    - Facilitate sessions to unify the YES Leadership Team around a clear understanding of its mission and purpose.
  4. **Public Outreach Campaign Guidance**
    - Develop strategies to educate the Livingston community about YES's vision, mission, and values.
  5. **Assessment of Local Conditions for Innovation**
    - Analyze local educational and community dynamics to strengthen innovation efforts.
  6. **Education Innovation Journey Support**
    - Provide insights into overcoming the challenges of pioneering a new school model.
- 

### IV. Consulting Packages and Investment

The Institute offers the following consulting packages to meet the unique needs of YES:

1. **Visionary Launch Package**
  - Six 90-minute coaching sessions (virtual or in-person).
  - Framework for designing a learner-driven culture.
  - Financial sustainability roadmap tailored to YES's mission.
  - Access to templates and resources for governance, hiring, and operations.

**Investment:** \$5,000
2. **Redesign & Growth Package**
  - Eight 90-minute coaching sessions.
  - Assessment of current systems and practices.
  - Strategies to scale enrollment and increase satisfaction rates.

- Implementation support for self-directed learning models.

**Investment:** \$7,500

### 3. **Comprehensive Partnership Package**

- Twelve 90-minute coaching sessions over six months.
- In-depth analysis of financial, operational, and pedagogical strategies.
- Regular team workshops and Q&A sessions.
- On-demand access to Dr. Thigpen and Dr. Collier for strategic guidance.

**Investment:** \$12,000

Customizations to these packages can address the specific goals and priorities of YES, including support for project-based learning, building community partnerships, and designing integrated curriculums. All packages include access to The Academy, an online platform of the Institute featuring courses in school leadership designed at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education.

---

## **V. Responsibilities of the Parties**

### **A. Institute for Self-Directed Learning**

- Deliver the agreed-upon coaching services with professionalism and expertise.
- Provide access to relevant resources, templates, and tools to support YES's development.
- Maintain open communication with Emily Post and the YES team.
- Provide opportunities for feedback throughout the consultation to ensure our services are meeting the needs and expectations of YES.

### **B. Yellowstone Experience School**

- Actively engage with coaching sessions and implement actionable recommendations.
  - Provide access to necessary information for assessments and planning.
  - Commit to creating a collaborative environment conducive to achieving YES's goals.
- 

## **VI. Terms, Termination, and Confidentiality**

- **Term:** This MOU will remain in effect for \_\_\_\_\_ unless extended by mutual agreement.
  - **Termination:** Either party may terminate the agreement with 30 days' written notice.
  - **Confidentiality:** Both parties agree to protect sensitive information shared during this partnership.
-

## **VII. Governing Law and Amendments**

This MOU shall be governed by the laws of \_\_\_\_\_ and may be amended only through mutual written agreement.

---

## **VIII. Signatures**

### **Institute for Self-Directed Learning**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Yellowstone Experience School**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: **Emily Post**

Title: **Founder and Leader**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Leslie A. Kennedy

417 South Yellowstone Street, Livingston, Montana 59047

(406)214-4958 [lesliekennedy406@gmail.com](mailto:lesliekennedy406@gmail.com)

## SUMMARY:

Passionate and dedicated educator with expertise in creating thoughtfully prepared learning environments that align with the latest child development research. Committed to fostering each child's natural curiosity and intrinsic motivation to learn, while promoting respect, independence, and a love of discovery.

## WORK EXPERIENCE:

### **Elevate Montessori School:** Toddler Guide, Director of Education, Founder

Livingston, Montana: February 2020 to Present

- Set educational standards and goals and helped establish policies, procedures and programs.
- Supports teachers with solid training, mentoring and day-to-day assistance.
- Plan and create inviting classroom spaces that are developmentally appropriate for 1.5-3 yr olds.
- Maintain close relations with families to ensure confidence and provide additional knowledge for families at their request or at regular intervals during parent education nights.

### **Authentic Institute of Montessori:** Assistant Teacher for Adult Learners

Bozeman, Montana: April 2022 to February 2024

- Administered practical exercises and diverse learning activities in alignment with course objectives.
- Participated in staff meetings and program development activities.
- Co-authored a manual for infant and toddler Montessori activities.

### **Montessori Island School:** Infant Lead Guide

Livingston, Montana: June 2016 to September 2019

- Transformed classroom from traditional day care to one based on the Montessori education model.
- Nurtured a supportive learning environment to foster creativity, learning and development for children and adult assistants in the classroom.
- Used classroom observations to grow our environment and assistant knowledge with timely articles, quotes and staff meeting discussions.

### **Xanterra Parks & Resorts:** Tour Guide and Driver

Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming: November 2012 to September 2013

- Interpret cultural, historical and natural sciences of the park with verbal stories and visual aids.
- Safely talk and drive buses and snow coaches of groups of up to forty people, aged 0 to 99.
- Educate guests regarding rules, regulations and safety of persons, wildlife and park features.

## EDUCATION:

- Hope Montessori Education Institute, September 2019  
Infant and Toddler Certification
- University of Missouri-Columbia, May 2007  
Bachelor of Journalism, Emphasis in Advertising and Public Relations Minor: Philosophy
- Appalachian Trail Conservancy 2,000-Miler Thru Hiker, Summer 2012

# Emily Post

406.202.8201

402 S. K Street, MT 59047

[epetersyo@gmail.com](mailto:epetersyo@gmail.com)

## **EDUCATION**

**M.A. Economics.** University of Montana, Missoula, MT. 2007-09.

**B.S. Biology.** Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA. 1997-2001.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Development/ Administration, Education Learning Studio Livingston, MT. Sept 2019 – Present**

Fundraising, grant writing/ reporting

Community Outreach and Communications/ Annual Report Completion

Program Development/ Curriculum Development/ Program outcomes data collection/ reporting

Budget Development/ Financial Strategist

Board Collaboration/ Hiring/ Management/ Volunteer Recruitment Coordination/ Training

Facilities Management

Non-profit Management

Public Charter School Application Draft and Submission to State Board of Ed

### **Executive Director, Community School Collaborative, Livingston, MT. Nov 2018 – Sept 2019.**

Fundraising, grant writing/ reporting

Community Outreach and Communications/ Annual Report Completion

Program Development/ Curriculum Development/ Program outcomes data collection/ reporting

Learning Workshop/ Event Planning and Coordination

Budget Development

Board Collaboration/ Hiring/ Management/ Volunteer Recruitment/ Training/ Coordination

### **Public Communications Administrator, Park County, Livingston, MT. Aug 2015 – April 2018.**

Public Communications Liaison: Responsible for public communications and media relations for Park County. Point contact for public and local, regional and statewide agencies.

Public Information Officer for Emergency Management: Works to increase emergency preparedness and communications during incidents and emergencies.

Internal Communications: Liaison between staff, public and county commission, inter-departmental relations.

Special projects administration/ grant writing and reporting

Public Safety Levy Campaign: Coordination with Finance and Public Safety to provide educational outreach to community and stakeholders.

### **Management Analyst, City of Livingston, Livingston, MT. Nov 2013- Aug 2015.**

Grants: Research, writing, budgeting, reporting, closeout documents, project management, bid process.

Communications: Develop communications plan, news releases, social media, website administration, newsletters, advertisements, GIS mapping, public surveys, fire truck bond communications planning.

Events Planning and Coordination: Summerfest, Arbor Day Event, Trails RX in collaboration with LHC marketing team, Rocky Mountain Tree School.

Human Resources: Hiring process, public works certification record keeping, drug testing, record management, employee safety training.

City Commission Meeting Secretary: Maintained minutes, agenda compilation.

# Emily Post

406.202.8201

402 S. K Street, MT 59047

[eapetersyo@gmail.com](mailto:eapetersyo@gmail.com)

## **Sustainability Coordinator, Lewis and Clark County, Helena, MT. Oct 2012- Nov 2013.**

Grants: Research, proposal writing, reporting, and overall management.

Purchasing/ Operations: Worked with County Commissioners and the Chief Administrative Officer to improve energy efficiency and purchasing efficiency within county operations.

## **Writer/ Program Manager, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Butte, MT. 2009- 2012.**

Publication Research/ Writing: Develop agricultural publication topics, research and write publications, peer-review staff publications, edited according to organization publication standards.

Program Manager: Managed hotline for farmers to provide agricultural information. Took phone calls, answered questions and mailed literature.

Grants: Research, writing, management.

## **Biologist/ Engineering Assistant, Gaston Engineering, Bozeman, MT. 2005-07**

Permitting: NEPA document preparation, open-pit mining/ reclamation permit applications, groundwater well and wastewater management permitting, water-right augmentation applications. Worked closely with DNRC, MDEQ, City/ County Planning Departments. Research/ Writing/ Design: Residential and commercial wastewater systems, environmental impact statements, traffic impact assessments, soils reports, groundwater monitoring, wetland delineation reports.

## **ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Housing Policy Solutions Board Treasurer- 2024-present

DPHHS Communities that Care Committee Member 2023-present

High Tech High Professional Development Training 2023

Community School Collaborative Advisory Board Member 2018- 2020

Brightworks Project Based Learning Workshop Completion, San Francisco, 2019

Shields Valley Farmers Market Advisory Committee 2018 - 2020

Park County Recreation and Wellness Planning Committee 2019 - present

Livingston Collective Impact Facilities Subcommittee Facilitator Fall 2017

Park County Community Foundation Board Member, January 2017 - 2020

Advanced Public Information Officer Training: O388 2018

Public Information Officer Training Certified - Introduction to Incident Information: S-203 Nov 2015

Livingston HealthCare LEAN Six Sigma 6-wk training, 2015

Leadership 49 2014/15 participant, 2015/16 planning committee member

MSU Extension Board Leadership Workshop completion 2013

Park County Local Advisory Committee 2013-14

# BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

January 28, 2025  
Zoom

**Tuesday, January 28, 2025**  
**11:00 AM**

## **CALL TO ORDER – 00:00:01**

Chair Tharp called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM. The Chair led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance and Ms. Kris Stockton took Roll Call. The Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests. Guests online introduced themselves to the Board.

Board members: Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair; Dr. Ron Slinger, Vice Chair; Ms. Renee Rasmussen; Ms. Madalyn Quinlan; Ms. Jane Hamman; Ms. Lisa Schmidt; Ms. Julia Maxwell. Ex Officio members: Superintendent Susie Hedalen, Office of Public Instruction, (OPI); Mr. Dylan Klapmeier, Governor's Office. Staff: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Ms. Julie Balsam, Accounting Technician. Guests: Laverne Barn; Mr. Todd Hanson, 4 Poles Consulting; Mr. Tim Hofer; Superintendent Dan McGee, Liberty School District; Ms. Jenine Synness, Business Clerk, Liberty School District; Ms. Aislinn Brown, Board Legal Counsel; Tyler Capece, Deputy Chief of Staff, OPI.

## **ADOPT AGENDA – 00:03:19**

**Board member Quinlan moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.**

**No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.**

## **❖ CHARTER COMMITTEE – Jane Hamman (Item 1)**

### **Item 1 ACTION ON REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF THE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL ACT AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS – 00:03:50** **Jane Hamman**

Chair Tharp reviewed the options before the Board which were to request an Attorney General's Opinion or request legislation be passed to revise the Public Charter School Act. Charter Committee Chair Hamman asked Board members for possible ideas for discussion. Charter Committee Chair Hamman recommended requesting amendments be added to HB 250 regarding English Language Learners (ELL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) Students. Committee Chair Hamman reviewed the proposed amendment to HB 250 that she drafted pertaining to ELL and ESL students. Chair Tharp noted that the Board should determine what direction they want to take whether that is asking for legislation or asking for an Attorney General's Opinion regarding remote instruction, which is his recommendation. Vice Chair Slinger noted that a legislative fix would be his preference. Board member Quinlan stated her agreement with Vice Chair Slinger to provide a clear statement of the problem for the Legislature to consider. Committee Chair Hamman stated both routes should be addressed. Board member Schmidt shared her concerns of creating unintended consequences. Board member Maxwell stated that requesting an Attorney General's Opinion might allow the Board to have a clearer vision of what might need to be revised in the statute. Board member Rasmussen stated her concern with legislative action and that seeking a legal opinion is her preference, and she suggested writing a memo to the Chairs of House Education and Senate Education stating the situation the Board is in due to the current statute. Chair Hamman stated that under the current statute applications will continue to come in that will be caught in the same situation, and that an Attorney General's Opinion will not fix that issue, only legislation can correct the problem. Chair Tharp noted that both a letter from the Board to the Legislative Committees outlining the problem and a request for an Attorney General's Opinion can both be done at this meeting.

**Board member Rasmussen moved under the direction of the Executive Committee to send a letter to the Legislative Education Committee's outlining the current situation regarding remote instruction and cultural issues, and to further move to direct the Executive**

**Committee, Executive Director, and Board Legal Counsel to draft a letter to request an Attorney General's opinion if there is no legislative correction. Motion seconded by Board member Quinlan.**

***Vice Chair Slinger noted his approval of the motion on the floor.***

***Board members discussed procedural questions.***

***Chair Tharp noted that legislators are aware of the issue and that it is important the Board stay in their lane regarding this issue.***

***Board member Quinlan noted it is important to clearly state the issue for the legislature.***

***Ms. Jenine Synness gave public comment supporting the Liberty Charter Application.***

***Mr. Todd Hanson gave public comment supporting the Liberty Charter Application.***

***Chair Tharp clarified the motion.***

***No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**PUBLIC COMMENT – 00:48:13**

No additional public comment.

Chair Tharp thanked Board member Hamman for her service.

#### **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 11:49 AM.

---

*The Montana Board of Public Education is a Professional Development Unit Provider. Attending a Board of Public Education Meeting either in person or via Zoom may qualify you to receive professional development units. Please complete the necessary information on the sign-in sheet if you are applying for professional development units.*

*Agenda items are handled in the order listed on the approved agenda. Items may be rearranged unless listed "time certain". Public comment is welcome on all items listed as "Action" and as noted at the beginning and end of each meeting.*

*The Board of Public Education will make reasonable accommodations for known disabilities that may interfere with an individual's ability to participate in the meeting. Individuals who require such accommodations should make requests to the Board of Public Education as soon as possible prior to the meeting start date. You may write to: Kris Stockton, PO Box 200601, Helena MT, 59620, email at: [kmstockton@mt.gov](mailto:kmstockton@mt.gov) or phone at 406-444-0302.*





ATTORNEYS:  
Lindsay M. Morse  
Ron A. Nelson  
Amber L. Stenson

ADMINISTRATOR:  
Scott A. Rubino

Phone: 406-761-3000  
Fax: 406-453-2313  
Web: [frontrangemt.com](http://frontrangemt.com)

114 3<sup>rd</sup> Steet South, Great Falls, MT 59401  
2020 Charlotte Street, Suite #8, Bozeman, MT 59718

January 27, 2025

Via E-Mail

Montana Board of Public Education  
c/o McCall Flynn  
46 North Last Chance Gulch  
Helena, MT 59601

RE: Liberty Elementary School District No. 10, through its proposed Liberty Academy  
Charter School  
Our Matter Number 250015

Dear Dr. Tharp & Board Members:

Thank you for your careful consideration of the Liberty Academy Charter School Academy. We genuinely appreciate your careful consideration of all applications. We appreciate the Board-wide recognition of the unique characteristics of Hutterite communities and their students and the ongoing challenges to meet Hutterite students' educational needs within our Public Education System. Each Board member has expressed a genuine understanding of need and the desire to help. Nonetheless, as the Board enters a new era of Charter Schools, we understand and appreciate the Board's desire to proceed cautiously to ensure it does not step outside the authority given to it by the Legislature and the Constitution. While we believe the Board has authority to grant Liberty's application, we believe it is prudent to confirm that by requesting an Attorney General's opinion and possibly clarification from the legislature.

As the Board considers its request for an Attorney General's opinion at its Special Meeting tomorrow, we would like to offer our assessment of the issue based upon the background and our observations during last week's meeting. The "valid applicant" issue raised by the Montana School Boards Association is dismissed by the clear language of HB 549 which authorizes a school district, in this case Liberty Elementary School District No. 10, to file a Charter School application. It appeared that the Board's legal counsel confirmed the validity of the applicant in response to the Chair's questions. The only other issue raised regarding the Board's authority to grant Liberty's Application is the application of Montana Code Annotated § 20-7-118 ("Section 118") regarding remote instruction.

Oddly, Section 118 is generally viewed as authorizing, not limiting, legislation. See Montana Code Annotated § 20-1-101(22). Section 118 authorizes a district to provide remote instruction to pupils located "in the **nearest** district [to the] pupil's district of

residence when the pupil's district of residence does not provide remote or in-person instruction **in an equivalent course**. A course is not equivalent if the course does not provide **the same level of advantage on successful completion**, including but not limited to dual credit, advanced placement, and career certification. Montana Code Annotated § 20-7-118(c) Emphasis Added. With respect to the pupils to be served by Liberty the intervening districts (those between Liberty and each of the Colonies involved) are Sunburst K-12, Galata Elementary, Fort Benton Elementary, North Star Elementary and Chester-Joplin-Inverness Elementary. Included with this letter is a summary of the history of the Colonies in dealing with the residential districts. Each of the Colonies involved in Liberty's application have been denied service by their respective districts of residence.

A key understanding in the educational challenge for the Colonies is the need for onsite education. Traditionally, that has been accomplished through inter-local agreements between Hutterite Colonies and their district of residence. The Montana Office of Public Instruction recognizes the unique character of Hutterite communities and their students. See Essential Understandings of Montana Hutterites, a Resource for Educators and Students (a copy of which is attached to this letter and available online at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED520607.pdf>). On page 6 of that publication, OPI states:

When they are six they begin formal German school and at seven they start "English" or public school. In addition to the public-school day, they have at least two hours of German, religion and culture, one hour in the morning before regular school and another hour after the regular school in a separate place from the public school, The German teacher, who is a member of the colony, uses the Bible as one of his texts. He is also the liaison to the public school.

...

The Hutterite students continue with these long days of formal education At meals, they are assigned two special teachers, a man and a woman, who sit with them in a separate room or table and teach the children table manners, obedience, respect and thankfulness. These adults also see to the children's needs for food, etc. The children sit by age.

The unique cultural, religious and language needs of Hutterite students can only be served through onsite education. They cannot simply "get on the bus." Doing so would require sacrifice and loss of cultural, religious and language needs<sup>1</sup>. Likewise, the previously available onsite instruction obtained through inter-local agreements facilitated and enhanced parental oversight which would also be available in a Charter School setting. The residential and geographically intervening districts do not provide and have

---

<sup>1</sup> Instruction in religious studies or topics occurs only within the German Immersion School which is entirely separate from the curriculum, pedagogy and instructional models taking place as part of the "public school" model.

January 27, 2025

Page 3

refused to provide an educational setting that recognizes and preserves core values and practices of Hutterite students.

In the context of Section 118, the question is whether it should be interpreted to limit remote instruction in this case. Section 118 should be broadly construed to achieve the fundamental purpose of public education which is to promote “the full educational potential of each person.” Montana Code Annotated § 20-7-601(1). In that same provision, the Legislature recognizing unique and individual needs declared, “any public or private regulation that discriminates against a district or pupil participating in forms of personalized learning referenced in this section is inconsistent with constitutional goals and guarantees under Article X of the Montana constitution.” In the applicable constitutional and policy framework, Section 118 clearly authorizes remote instruction for these students through Liberty. The nearest district to each of the Colonies involved that provides “an equivalent course<sup>2</sup>” is Liberty.

To present the question to the Attorney General, the unique characteristics of the Hutterite Colonies need to be explained and incorporated into the question. With that in mind, we suggest that the question to the Attorney General should be phrased as follows:

Does Montana Code Annotated § 20-7-118 authorize the provision of remote instruction by Liberty Elementary School District No. 10, through its proposed Liberty Academy Charter School to Hutterite Colony students in elementary school districts other than Liberty Elementary School District No. 10.

If permitted, we are happy to provide additional background and context to the Board and the Attorney General to explain the unique circumstances involved in education of Hutterite Colony students.

Again, we thank the Board for its careful and thoughtful consideration of Liberty’s application. If the Board or any of its members would like further comments or discussion, we are happy to provide it.

Sincerely,

FRONT RANGE LAW, PLLC

By



Ron A. Nelson

Enc.

---

<sup>2</sup> The term “course” should not be narrowly interpreted to refer to a single class or topic. Necessarily, it would need to incorporate multiple classes or topics to be effective. To limit the term to a class or topic would ignore the overall goals and rights of these students to a full and meaningful education. That term should also include a course of study or instructional pedagogy.

January 27, 2025

Page 4

CC: Liberty Elementary School District No. 10  
Dylan Klapmeier

YEAR	Eagle Creek Colony	Riverview Colony	Cool Springs Colony	Hillside Colony	Rimrock Colony	Sunnybrook Colony
FY1986-87 thru FY1990-91	Eagle Creek operated their school privately until petitioning OPI and opening a public school / Liberty School District for 1986-87 school year.					
FY1991-92 thru FY1999-00	Continued operation of public school district.	Liberty operated school at Riverview after CJI declined. (8 years)				
FY2000-01 thru FY2012-13	Continued operation of public school district.	Due to Riverview's increased enrollment, CJI opted to operate Riverview		Uncertain start date until they notified Hillside they would no longer do so, Sunburst operated school onsite at Hillside Colony.	Uncertain start date until they notified Rimrock they would no longer do so, Sunburst operated school onsite at Rimrock Colony.	
FY2013-14 thru FY2022-23	Continued operation of public school district.	After enrollment decreased, CJI opted not to operate Riverview and once again entered interlocal agreement with Liberty for operation of Riverview.	North Star school district declined to operate colony school at Cool Springs. Beginning in 2015-16, CJI operated Cool Springs. (8 years)	Beginning in 2016-17, Liberty operated Hillside school through interlocal agreement with Liberty. (7 years)	Beginning in 2016-17, Liberty operated Rimrock school through interlocal agreement with Liberty. (7 years)	In 2021-22, Ft. Benton declined any involvement with Sunnybrook school due to increased workload and one-year delay in state funding. Operated as private school.



FY2023-24	Public school; standalone district.	CJI declined to operate school at Riverview and declined to enter into multi-district agreement to allow Liberty to operate. Colony operated school privately.	CJI declined to operate school at Cool Springs. No services were provided from North Star (district of residence). Colony operated school privately.	Liberty operated Hillside School through a multi-district agreement with Sunburst. In accordance with HB 214, Sunburst reported ANB.	Liberty operated Rimrock School through a multi-district agreement with Sunburst. In accordance with HB 214, Sunburst reported ANB.	Operated as private school.
FY2024-25	Public school; standalone district.	No public education available. Colony is operating a private school.	No public education available. Colony is operating a private school.	No public education available. Colony is operating a private school.	No public education available. Colony is operating a private school.	No public education available. Colony is operating a private school.



# ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF **Montana Hutterites**

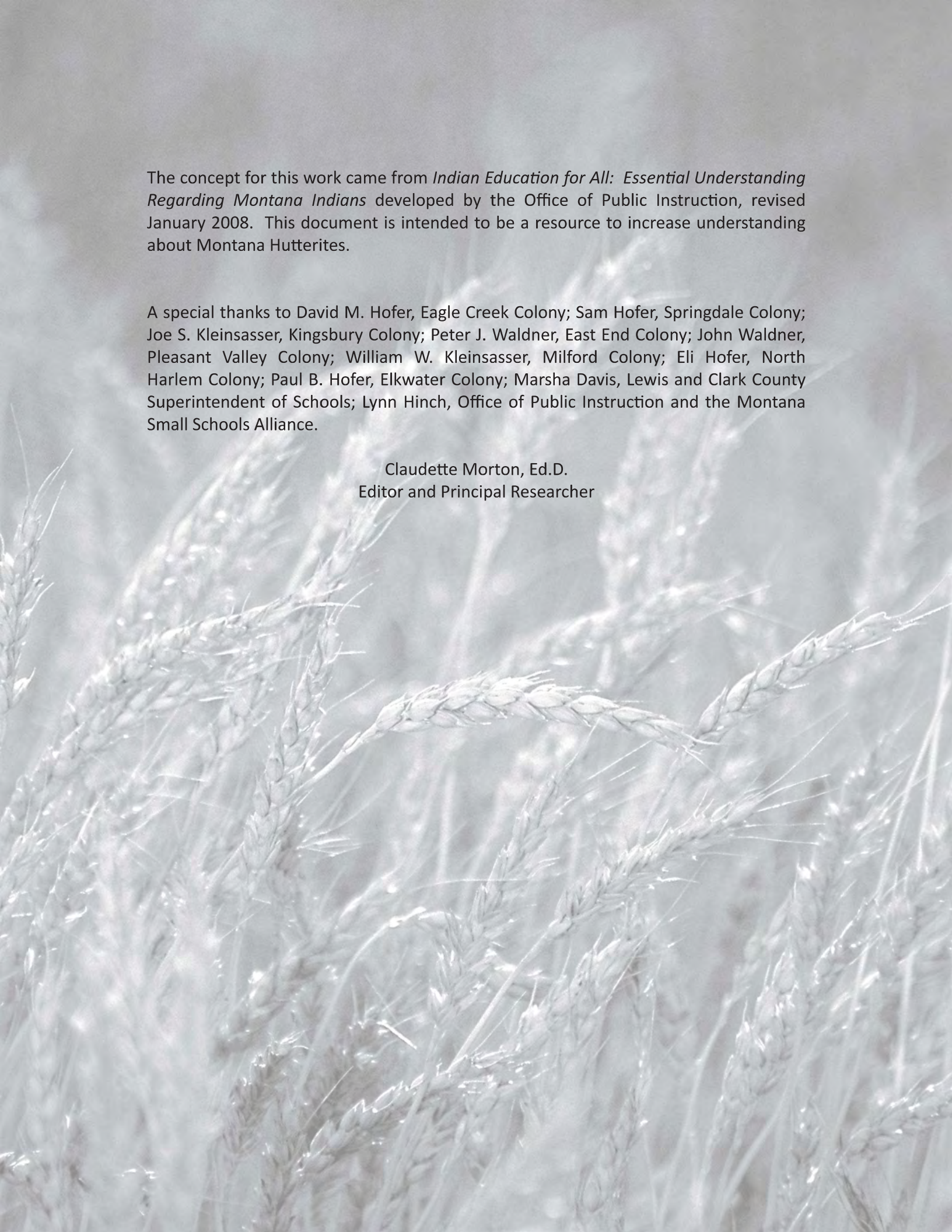
A Resource for Educators and Students



[opi.mt.gov](http://opi.mt.gov)

Developed by Montana Educators and  
the Montana Office of Public Instruction





The concept for this work came from *Indian Education for All: Essential Understanding Regarding Montana Indians* developed by the Office of Public Instruction, revised January 2008. This document is intended to be a resource to increase understanding about Montana Hutterites.

A special thanks to David M. Hofer, Eagle Creek Colony; Sam Hofer, Springdale Colony; Joe S. Kleinsasser, Kingsbury Colony; Peter J. Waldner, East End Colony; John Waldner, Pleasant Valley Colony; William W. Kleinsasser, Milford Colony; Eli Hofer, North Harlem Colony; Paul B. Hofer, Elkwater Colony; Marsha Davis, Lewis and Clark County Superintendent of Schools; Lynn Hinch, Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Small Schools Alliance.

Claudette Morton, Ed.D.  
Editor and Principal Researcher



# Essential Understandings of Montana Hutterites: A Resource for Educators and Students

Developed by Montana Educators and the Montana Office of Public Instruction

Researched and edited by Dr. Claudette Morton,



Published by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2010



Montana  
**Office of Public Instruction**  
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

## **Essential Understandings Regarding Hutterites (Hutterite Brethren, Hutterians)**

### **Essential Understanding 1**

**Hutterites Colonies exist throughout Montana. [See map on next page.]**

**They pay taxes and contribute to Montana's economy.**

### **BACKGROUND**

The term Hutterite comes from the name of the founder of the group, Jakob Hutter, a hat maker by trade. Hut is German for hat and the English pronunciation of Hutterite is with a short u, the same way we pronounce the name of a small house: hut.

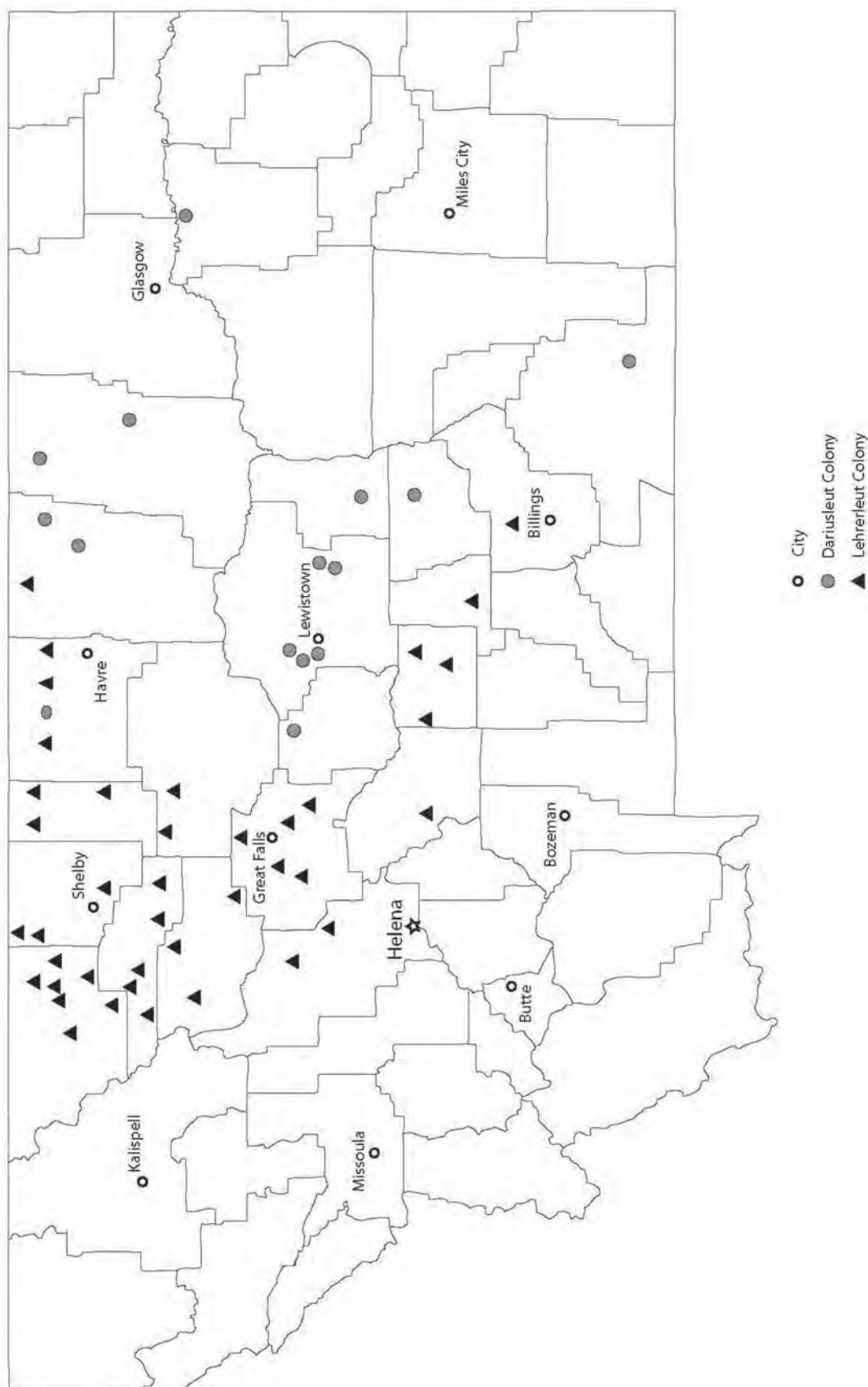
Hutterite people live in colonies located primarily throughout rural Montana, South Dakota and the Canadian Provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. A colony is a group of families governed by the minister who is elected. A secretary, who writes checks and keeps the records, and an assistant minister, who may be the German teacher, are elected. Depending on what the colony's major areas of agriculture are, they may have managers. For example, if raising hogs is a major program they will have a manager for the hog operation. Each adult has assigned responsibilities to sustain the colony. They are democratic, and all major decisions are made by the people who are affected. About 100 people live on each colony although the actual size varies. There are approximately 50 colonies in Montana. The term colony refers both to the land that a particular group owns, the buildings, and the group of people itself.

The Hutterite colonies in Montana contribute to the state's economy as hog, beef, dairy, egg, poultry and grain producers. In the summer time their vans can be seen at farmers' markets throughout the state where they sell fresh produce, eggs, poultry and some times bakery products. The colonies are primarily self-sufficient. In recent times they contribute to the local economy by contracting for specialized services. They make their own clothes, build their own buildings and repair and maintain almost everything including farm implements on the colony. Colonies are also diversifying and they provide some services on a neighborly basis.

Because the colonies own land, they pay significant property taxes and because they own farm equipment and livestock they pay business and livestock taxes. In some of our small rural districts they may be among the school district's biggest property tax payers, and if it weren't for the Hutterite children, the public school district might close.



## Location of Hutterite Colonies in Montana, 2010



(Map courtesy of Eli Hofer, 2010)

## Essential Understanding 2

The Hutterites in Montana represent two branches: the *Dariusleut* and the *Lehrerleut*.

### BACKGROUND

When the Hutterites moved to North America (Canada and the United States), in the 1870's, they formed three colonies. From those original colonies, two branches moved to Montana. Darius Walther was the minister of one of the original colonies, and his people were called Dariusleut. The other group in Montana is the *Lehrerleut* named because their minister was a teacher and the German word for teacher is *lehrer*. The word *leut* means folk or people.

Currently, there are 15 *Dariusleut* colonies in Montana and 35 *Lehrerleut* colonies. See a list of the colonies and their affiliation on the next two pages.

Each branch has its own bishop or head of the whole group, and economically and socially, the people of the one group tend not to mix with the people of the other. However, all Hutterites are willing to lend help to anyone else when needed. To a keen observer there are some small differences. The men of the *Lehrerleut* group use buttons on their clothes where as the men of the *Dariusleut* use hooks and eyes as fasteners. They both follow the major tenets of their faith. The *Lehrerleut* are generally considered the more conservative of the two branches.

The colonies visit back and forth in Montana and Canada. When the young people marry, the wife moves to make a home in her husband's colony although she may visit her family frequently.

## Montana Hutterite Colonies & Schools 2010

County	Group	Colony	School District
Big Horn	D	Forty Mile	<i>private</i>
Blaine	L	Hartland –AC	Chinook
	D	North Harlem—Ind. Dist.	North Harlem
	D	Turner—Not AC	Turner
Cascade	L	Fair Haven—AC	Ulm
	L	Pleasant Valley—AC	Belt
	L	Big Stone-AC	Centerville
	L	Cascade—AC	Sun River Valley
	L	Hill Crest	<i>Not opening until 2012</i>
Chouteau	L	Twin Hills	Knees
	L	Sunny Brook	<i>Not opening until 2012</i>
Fergus	D	Ayers—Ind. Dist.	Ayers
	D	Deerfield—Ind. Dist.	Deerfield
	D	Fords Creek w/Ayers	
	D	King Colony—Ind. Dist.	King Ranch
	D	Spring Colony—Ind. Dist.	Spring Creek
Glacier	L	Glacier—AC	Cut Bank
	L	Glendale—AC	Browning
	L	Big Sky—AC	Browning
	L	Hidden Lake—AC	Cut Bank
	L	Horizon	<i>Not opening until 2012</i>
	L	Seville—Ind. District	Mountain View
	L	Zenith	<i>Not opening until 2011</i>
Golden Valley	L	Golden Valley—AC	Rye Gate
Hill	L	East End—AC	Rocky Boy
	D	Gilford Colony—Ind. Dist.	Gilford
	L	Hilldale—AC	Rocky Boy
Judith Basin	D	Surprise Creek—AC	Geyser School
Lewis & Clark	L	Milford Colony—Ind. Dist.	Auchard Creek
	L	Elk Creek	<i>Not opening until 2011</i>
Liberty	L	Riverview—AC	Chester-Joplin-Inverness
	L	Sage Creek—AC	Chester-Joplin-Inverness
	L	Eagle Creek—Ind. Dist.	Liberty Elementary
McCone	D	Prairie Elk—AC	Vida
Meagher	L	Springdale—AC	White Sulphur Springs
Musselshell	D	Kilby Butte	Roundup
	D	Flat Willow Ranch	Winnett
Phillips	D	East Malta	Malta
	D	Loring—AC	Malta
Pondera	L	Kingsbury—AC	Valier
	L	Miami---Ind. Dist.	New Miami Colony
	L	Pondera—AC	Dutton-Brady
	L	Birch Creek—AC	Dutton-Brady
	L	Midway Colony—AC	Dutton-Brady
Teton	L	Miller—AC	Bynum
	L	New Rockport—AC	Golden Ridge
	L	Rockport—Ind. District	Rockport
Toole	L	Cam Rose—AC	Shelby
	L	Rimrock—AC	Sunburst
	L	Hillside Colony—AC	Sunburst
Wheatland	L	Springwater—AC	Harlowton
	L	Martinsdale—AC	Harlowton
	L	Duncan—AC	Harlowton
Yellowstone	L	Mountainview—AC	Broadview

AC denotes Attendance Center.

## Essential Understanding 3

Religion guides the Hutterite way of life.

### BACKGROUND

Religion is central to everything the Hutterites do. They are Christians, but they have some important distinctions from other protestant churches. They are Anabaptists, which means that they believe their members should wait until they are adults and can choose to be baptized. Some wait into their twenties or thirties to commit to their religion and life on the colony.

Anabaptists introduced the concept of separation of church and state during the Reformation. The Hutterites believe strongly in freedom of religion. Hutterites are tolerant of all religions.

They also believe in an elected lay ministry and are non-combative. There are three distinctions that most *English* (the name they give to all non-Hutterites) see immediately: The handmade, dark clothes, hats for the men, head scarves for the women, the German language they speak to each other, and the fact that they live in colonies. These are all outward signs of their belief of having a separate society from worldliness. They shun superfluous material possessions and work together as a community for the common good. Their modest clothes show obedience and humility.

## Essential Understanding 4

Hutterites value education for their children.

### BACKGROUND

As far back as 1578, historical records of regulations showed the Hutterite schools and teachers were advanced for their times. Hutterites began kindergarten before any other culture.

At age two and a half or three, children in a Hutterite Colony begin their education in their *Kindergarten*, which we would call a combination of childcare and pre-school. They learn to pray, play, share, sing songs and eat properly. This begins their formal teaching of 'high' German. At five students begin a longer German kindergarten.

When they are six they begin formal German school and at seven they start "English" or public school. In addition to the public school day, they have at least two hours of German, religion and culture, one hour in the morning before regular school and another hour after the regular school in a separate place from the public school. The German teacher, who is a member of the colony, uses *The Bible* as one of his texts. He is also the liaison to the public school.

Like other Montana public schools, the colony schools follow the Montana Accreditation Standards. Though they are concerned about the eroding influence of electronic and entertainment media on their children, they generally allow educational/informational media resources in their schools.

The Hutterite students continue with these long days of formal education. At meals, they are assigned two special teachers, a man and a woman, who sit with them in a separate room or table and teach the children table manners, obedience, respect and thankfulness. These adults also see to the children's needs for food, etc. The children sit by age.

As they get older they are expected to work with adult members of the colony in the summers and when not in school to learn a vocation. This is a very important part of their education, because it is their future.

At age 15 the boys and the girls move toward more adult work activities. Some colonies do allow their students to continue with high school, but the concern of the influence of non-colony life, keeps some from pursuing formal education at a public high school. Other colonies encourage correspondence classes and distance education to allow their children to receive a high school diploma.

There are instances where some young people are going on to state universities to become teachers for their own colony schools. The young people become skilled at their trades within the colony and learn to use sophisticated, commercial techniques.



## Essential Understanding 5

The Hutterites have a distinct history impacted by governments and wars.

### BACKGROUND

Hutterites are a communal branch of Anabaptists, who, like the Amish and Mennonites trace their roots to the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Their beliefs, especially the concept of Christian Community, have resulted in hundreds of years of odyssey through many countries.

Nearly extinct by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Hutterites found a new home in North America. They migrated to the United States after the Civil War, and from a population of about 400, grew to upwards of 50,000. There are approximately 500 colonies spread out over the northern part of the western United States and southern Canada.

### HISTORY

Originating in the Austrian province of Tyrol in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the forerunners of the Hutterites migrated to Moravia to escape persecution. There, under the leadership of Jakob Hutter, they were able to strengthen, refine and adjust their practices to fit with current society. Their communal form of living is based on the New Testament books of Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2 (especially Verse 44), 4 and 5 and Second Corinthians. This distinguishes them from other Anabaptists such as the Amish and the Mennonites.

Peter Riedeman, another early elder, wrote his *Confession of Faith* in 1540. This document is taught and used in colonies even today.

During the next hundred years, church membership grew to fifty thousand, and the people were known for their outstanding workmanship as farmers, millers, weavers and clock-makers. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) wiped out every colony in Moravia and almost ended their congregations, but some Hutterites escaped to Slovakia and Transylvania. Not long after the move, the Empress of Austria, Maria Theresa, a devout Catholic, declared that all worship outside of the state church was forbidden. Except for a small group who crossed the Alps to Wallachia, then under Turkish rule, no one escaped this crack down. Children were removed from parents and the elderly were sent to live in monasteries.

Those who escaped over the Alps were accepted by the Turks and allowed to settle in 1767 near Bucharest. The next year war broke out in this region between Russia and Turkey and the peace loving Hutterites were caught in the middle. However, in 1770, Count Rumiantsev, who was head of the Russian army, offered them free land on his estates in the Ukraine and so they traveled from Bucharest to the Desna River. For the next one hundred years the Hutterites lived in the Ukraine. They enjoyed complete freedom of religion, control over their schools and exemption from military service.

However, in 1870, the Russian government, which controlled the Ukraine at the time, introduced

compulsory military service. The Hutterites decided they should leave and so they sent scouts with the Mennonite delegation to visit North America in 1873. Three groups totaling 1265 individuals migrated to North America between 1874 and 1879 in response to the new Russian military service law. Of these, 400 chose to live in a communal societal setting, versus individual ownership of property as the major part of their Anabaptist convictions

Most Hutterites are descended from these 400. Names for the leader of each group, the three groups were called the *Schmiedeleut*, *Dariusleut*, and *Lehrerleut* (*leut* in the German word for people). They settled initially in the Dakota Territory. Later, some *Dariusleut* and *Lehrerleut* colonies were established in Montana. Here, each group reestablished the traditional Hutterite communal lifestyle.

During World War One, the pacifist Hutterites suffered persecution in the United States. The Hutterite community responded by abandoning Dakota and moving 17 of the 18 existing American colonies to the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. With the passage of laws in the United States to protect conscientious objectors, some of the *Schmiedeleut* ultimately returned to the Dakotas beginning in the 1930s where they built and inhabited new colonies. Some of the abandoned structures from the first wave of Hutterite Colonies still stand in South Dakota.

In 1942, alarmed at the influx of Dakota Hutterites buying copious tracts of land, the province of Alberta passed the Communal Properties Act, severely restricting the expansion of the *Dariusleut* and *Lehrerleut* colonies. The act was repealed in 1973 allowing Hutterites to once again purchase land. The 1942 law resulted in the establishment of a number of new colonies in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Montana and eastern Washington in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1963, legislation was introduced in the Montana House of Representatives to limit the amount of land that Hutterites could buy and own. It was defeated by the work of Francis Bardanoue from Harlem and George Harper from Helena who spoke passionately on the House Floor against the bill because it was designed to discriminate against one particular group of citizens.

The total Hutterite population in both the United States and Canada is generally estimated to be between forty and fifty thousand. Even today there are many misconceptions about the Hutterites who have colonies throughout Montana, live peacefully and contribute to our economy.

---

Much of the factual information was taken from:

Hofer, Peter. *The Hutterian Brethren and Their Beliefs*. Starbuck, Manitoba: 1955.

Murphy, Don. Hutterian Brethren Church.  
[www.anabaptistchurch.org/hutterian\\_brethren.htm](http://www.anabaptistchurch.org/hutterian_brethren.htm) Last updated 2/25/2008.

Peters, Victor. *The Hutterians-History and Communal Organization of a Rural Group in Manitoba*. MHS Transactions, Series 3, 1960-61 Seasons. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba History Society.  
<http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/hutterites.shtml>

Stanton, Max and Jansen, Rod. *The Hutterites of North America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

*Wikipedia* and revised for accuracy by the Hutterite Education Committee. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutterite>











[opi.mt.gov](http://opi.mt.gov)

Developed by Montana Educators and  
the Montana Office of Public Instruction

The Office of Public Instruction is committed to equal employment opportunity and nondiscriminatory access to all our programs and services, and will take necessary and appropriate steps to insure that the workplace and OPI programs and services are free of discrimination and sexual harassment. For information or to file a complaint, contact OPI Title IX/EEO Coordinator at (406) 444-3161 or [opipersonnel@mt.gov](mailto:opipersonnel@mt.gov). Copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of \$ . per copy, for a total cost of \$ .00, which includes \$ .00 for printing and \$0.00 for distribution.



# **CONSENT AGENDA**

## **FINANCIALS**

## 51010 Board of Public Education ORG Budget Summary by OBPP Prog, Subclass, Fund

Data Selected for Month/FY: 01 (Jul)/2025 through 09 (Mar)/2025

This report compares ORG Budgets (ORG\_BD) to Actuals expended amounts

Business Unit	(All)
Program Year	(All)
FY_BudPer	(All)
Month	(All)
Source of Auth	(All)
Fund Type	(All)
Account	(All)
Acct Lvl 1	(All)
Acct Lvl 2	(All)
Account Type	E
Project	(All)
Ledger	(All)

[Return to Menu](#)

OBPP Program	Subclass	Fund	Org	ORG Budget	Actuals Amt	A Accrual Amt	ORG Bud Balance
01 K-12 EDUCATION				591,202.00	291,192.51	0.00	300,009.49
	235H1	ADMINISTRATION		546,722.00	275,245.83	0.00	271,476.17
		01100 General Fund		535,164.00	275,245.83	0.00	259,918.17
			1 BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION	535,164.00	275,245.83	0.00	259,918.17
			ALL All Organization Rollup	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
		02122 Advisory Council		11,510.00	0.00	0.00	11,510.00
			1 BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION	11,510.00	0.00	0.00	11,510.00
			ALL All Organization Rollup	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
		02219 Research Fund		48.00	0.00	0.00	48.00
			1 BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION	48.00	0.00	0.00	48.00
			ALL All Organization Rollup	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	235H4	SITSD RST		44,480.00	14,150.11	0.00	30,329.89
		01100 General Fund		44,480.00	14,150.11	0.00	30,329.89
			1 BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION	44,480.00	14,150.11	0.00	30,329.89
			ALL All Organization Rollup	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	235V1	RENEWAL COMM PRIVATE FUNDS		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
		08084 Community Choice Schools		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
			20 Community Choice Schools	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	235V3	CCS COMMISSION UNSP		0.00	1,796.57	0.00	(1,796.57)
		08084 Community Choice Schools		0.00	1,796.57	0.00	(1,796.57)
			20 Community Choice Schools	0.00	1,796.57	0.00	(1,796.57)
	235Z1	WORKERS COMP. REDUCTION		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
		01100 General Fund		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

OBPP Program	Subclass	Fund	Org	ORG Budget	Actuals Amt	A Accrual Amt	ORG Bud Balance
01 K-12 EDUC	235Z1 WORK	01100 General Fund	1 BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
			ALL All Organization Rollup	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
		<b>02219 Research Fund</b>		<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
			1 BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
			ALL All Organization Rollup	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>591,202.00</b>	<b>291,192.51</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>300,009.49</b>

❖ **REPORTS – (Items 1-6)**

**Dr. Tim Tharp**

**ITEM 1**

**CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT**

- **Welcome from Superintendent Dan Rispens, East Helena Public Schools**
  - **Welcome New Board Member**
  - **Committee Assignments**

**Dr. Tim Tharp**





# Board of Public Education

## Board of Public Education

### Committee Assignments

February 2025

#### STANDING COMMITTEES

##### **Executive Committee**

Tim Tharp, Chair  
Ron Slinger, Vice Chair  
McCall Flynn, Executive Director

##### **Licensure Committee**

Ron Slinger, Chair  
Julia Maxwell, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

##### **Charter School Committee**

Ron Slinger, Chair  
Lisa Schmidt, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

##### **MSDB Committee**

Lisa Schmidt, Chair  
Julia Maxwell, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

##### **Legislative Committee**

Renee Rasmussen, Chair  
Madalyn Quinlan, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

##### ***Ad Hoc Legal Complaint Committee***

*Madalyn Quinlan, Chair  
Renee Rasmussen, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member*

##### **Accreditation Committee**

Madalyn Quinlan, Chair  
Hannah Nieskens, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

##### **Assessment Committee**

Renee Rasmussen, Chair  
Hannah Nieskens, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

#### ADVISORY GROUP LIAISONS

Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education – Julia Maxwell

Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council – McCall Flynn

Montana School Safety Advisory Committee – McCall Flynn

#### OTHER COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Education and Workforce Data Governing Board – Tim Tharp

Montana Digital Academy Governing Board – McCall Flynn

## **ITEM 2**

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

**McCall Flynn**

## **ITEM 3**

### **STATE SUPERINTENDENT REPORT**

- **Assessment Update**
- **NAEP Overview**
- **Federal Report**
- **Accreditation Report**
- **Content Standards Revision Update**
- **Annual School Food Services Report**

**State Superintendent Susie Hedalen**

# Montana Board of Public Education Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	Assessment Update
<b>Presenter</b>	Cedar Rose
<b>Position Title</b>	Assessment Director Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	Update on state-wide student assessments
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Information Item
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	n/a





## March 2024 BPE Assessment Update

### MAST Window 2 Summary

- Each student assigned 2 ELA testlets, an ELA performance task, and a pre-scheduled number of math testlets aligned to local scope and sequence (between 2-5).
- Participation estimations (calculated based on students completing all assigned testlets): ELA-97.4%; Math-96.7%
- Window 2 Listening Session held January 26.

### ACCESS for ELLs Assessment

- Window open December 2-February 21.
- Participation estimations prior to data reconciliation (calculated based on completing all four domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening): 79%

### Spring Summative Assessments

	SY2024-25 Test Windows	Required Subjects	Student Group	Grades Tested	Window Period
Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST)	<u>Window 1</u> October 14- November 22	Math and ELA	General	Grades 3–8	3 windows: 6 weeks each  Final Anchor window: 3 weeks
	<u>Window 2</u> January 13- February 21				
	<u>Window 3</u> March 24- May 2				
	<u>Window 4</u> (Anchor only) May 5-May 23				
ACCESS for ELLs	December 2- February 21	English Language Proficiency	English Learners	Grades K–12	12 weeks
Montana Science Assessment (MSA)	March 3- May 23	Science	General	Grades 5, 8	12 weeks
Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)	March 10- April 25	Math and ELA	SwSCDs	Grades 3–8, 11	7 weeks
Montana Alternate Science Assessment (AMSA)	March 10- April 25	Science	SwSCDs	Grades 5, 8, 11	7 weeks
ACT with Writing	<u>Window 1</u> March 25- April 4	Math, ELA, and Science	General	Grade 11	3 windows: 3 weeks each
	<u>Window 2</u> April 8-18				
	<u>Window 3</u> April 22-May 2				

If you have any questions, please contact:  
**Cedar Rose, Assessment Director**  
[cedar.rose@mt.gov](mailto:cedar.rose@mt.gov)



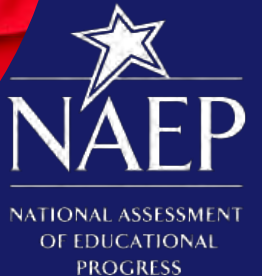
# NAEP 2024

## Mathematics and Reading Results at Grades 4 and 8

---

Shantel Niederstadt, NAEP State Coordinator  
Montana Office of Public Instruction,  
Assessment Unit  
[sniederstadt@mt.gov](mailto:sniederstadt@mt.gov)  
444-3450

March 11 & 12, 2025





# What is NAEP?

- It's the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- The only assessment that measures what U.S. students know and can do in various subjects across the nation, states, and in some cases, urban districts.
- NAEP results are released at "The Nation's Report Card"



---

National Assessment of  
Educational Progress



# Overview of NAEP 2024 Administration

- Data collected from January – March 2024
- Administered as a digitally based assessment on tablets
- National, state, large urban district samples
  - ❖ 235,000 grade 4 students participated from approximately 6,100 schools
  - ❖ 230,000 grade 8 students participated from approximately 5,400 schools
- Reported as
  - ❖ Average scores on NAEP mathematics and NAEP reading scales ranging from 0 to 500
  - ❖ Five selected percentiles (10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th)
  - ❖ NAEP achievement levels (*NAEP Basic*, *NAEP Proficient*, and *NAEP Advanced*)
- School, teacher, and student survey questions
  - ❖ Included questions about absenteeism and how educators addressed educational recovery



# Montana's Participation

There were 230 schools in 141 districts across Montana.

## Mathematics

	<u>Student Sample Size</u>	<u>Student Participation</u>
Grade 4	1800	91%
Grade 8	1700	87%

## Reading

	<u>Student Sample Size</u>	<u>Student Participation</u>
Grade 4	1700	89%
Grade 8	1700	87%

# Timeline of students who were **fourth-** and **eighth-graders** in 2024

---

Grade 4

K



Grade 8

Grade 4



2019-20

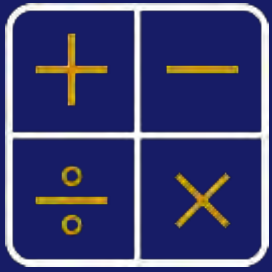
2020-21

2021-22

2022-23

2023-24





## Montana's Highlights

---

Grade 4 & 8 students performed above the national public average in all subject areas – mathematics and reading

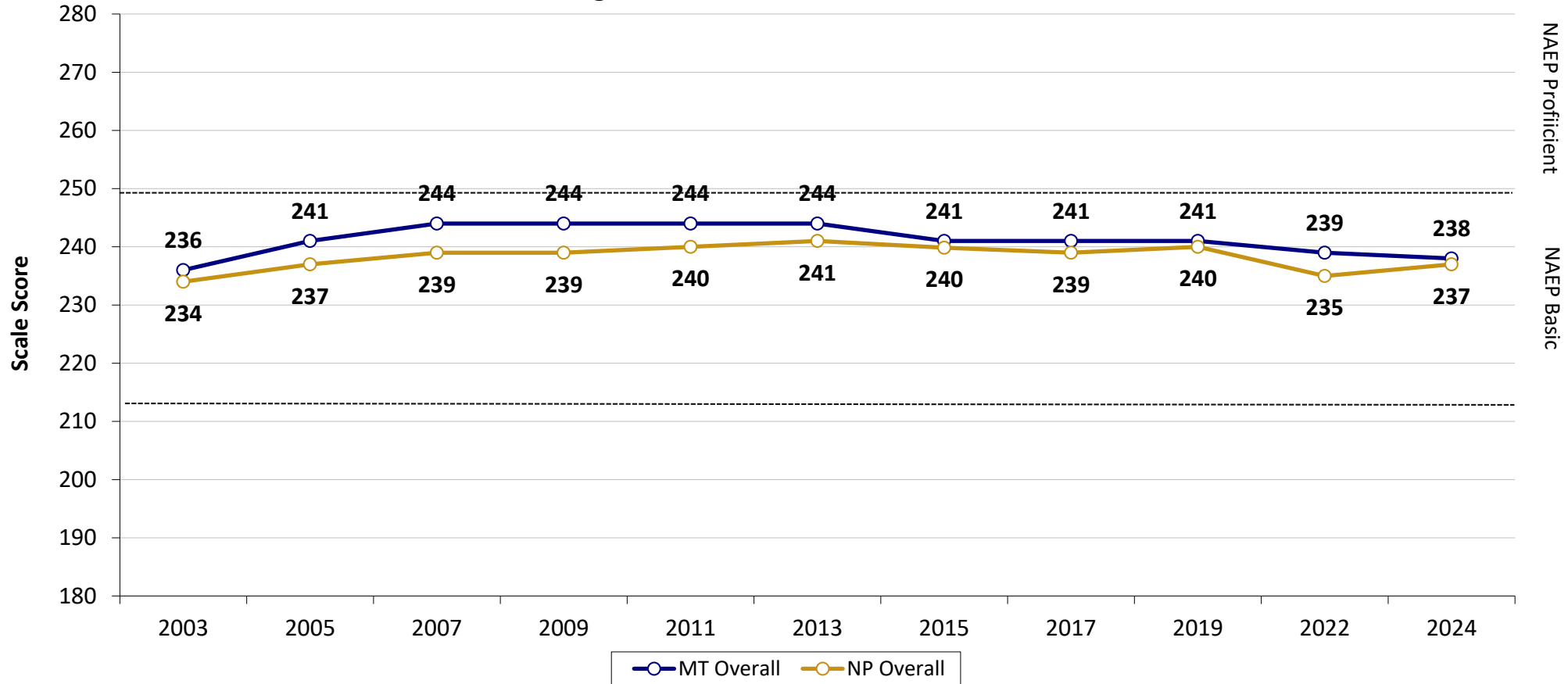




# Mathematics – Grade 4

## NAEP Mathematics Grade 4 – Overall

*Average Scale Score: 2003-2024*



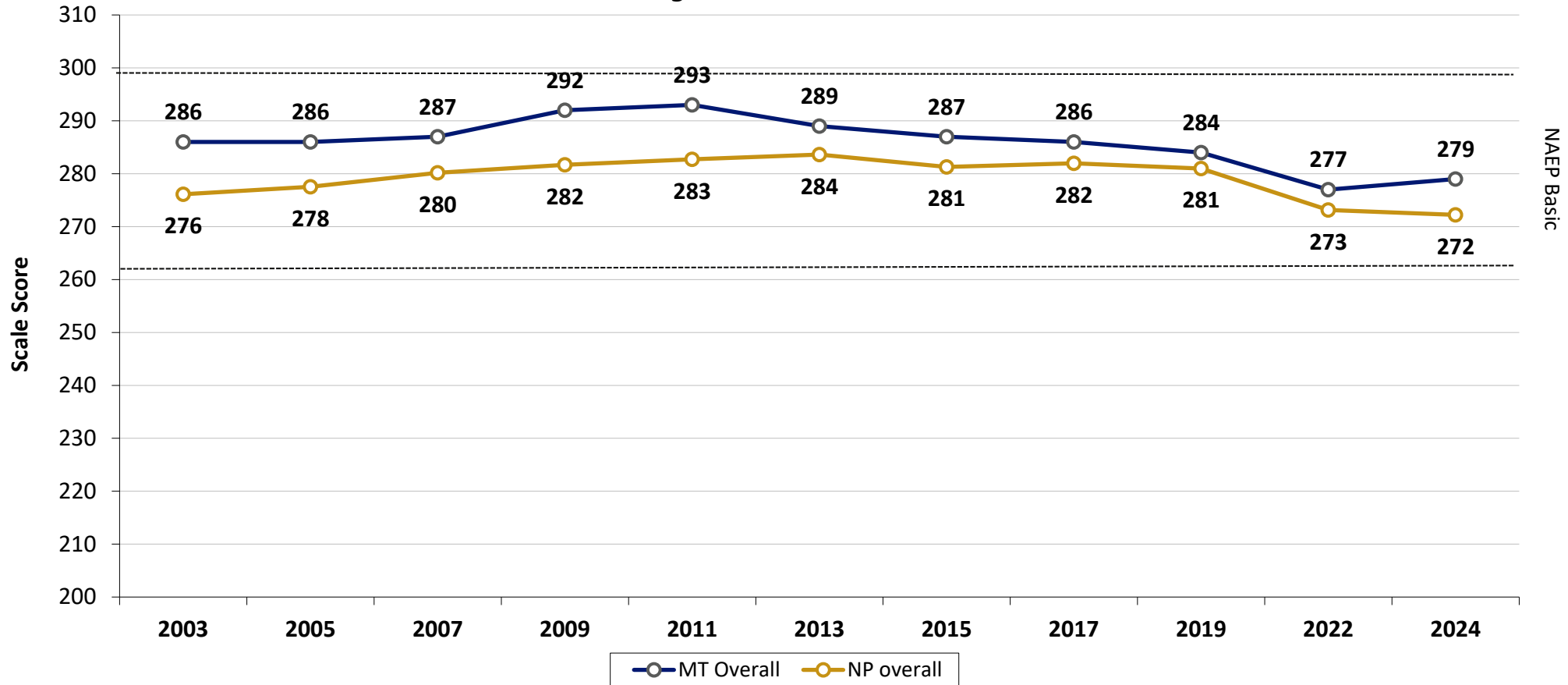
NOTE: The NAEP Mathematics scale ranges from 0 to 500. Observed differences are not necessarily statistically significant.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).



# Mathematics – Grade 8

**NAEP Mathematics Grade 8 – Overall**  
*Average Scale Score: 2003–2024*



NOTE: The NAEP Mathematics scale ranges from 0 to 500. Observed differences are not necessarily statistically significant.

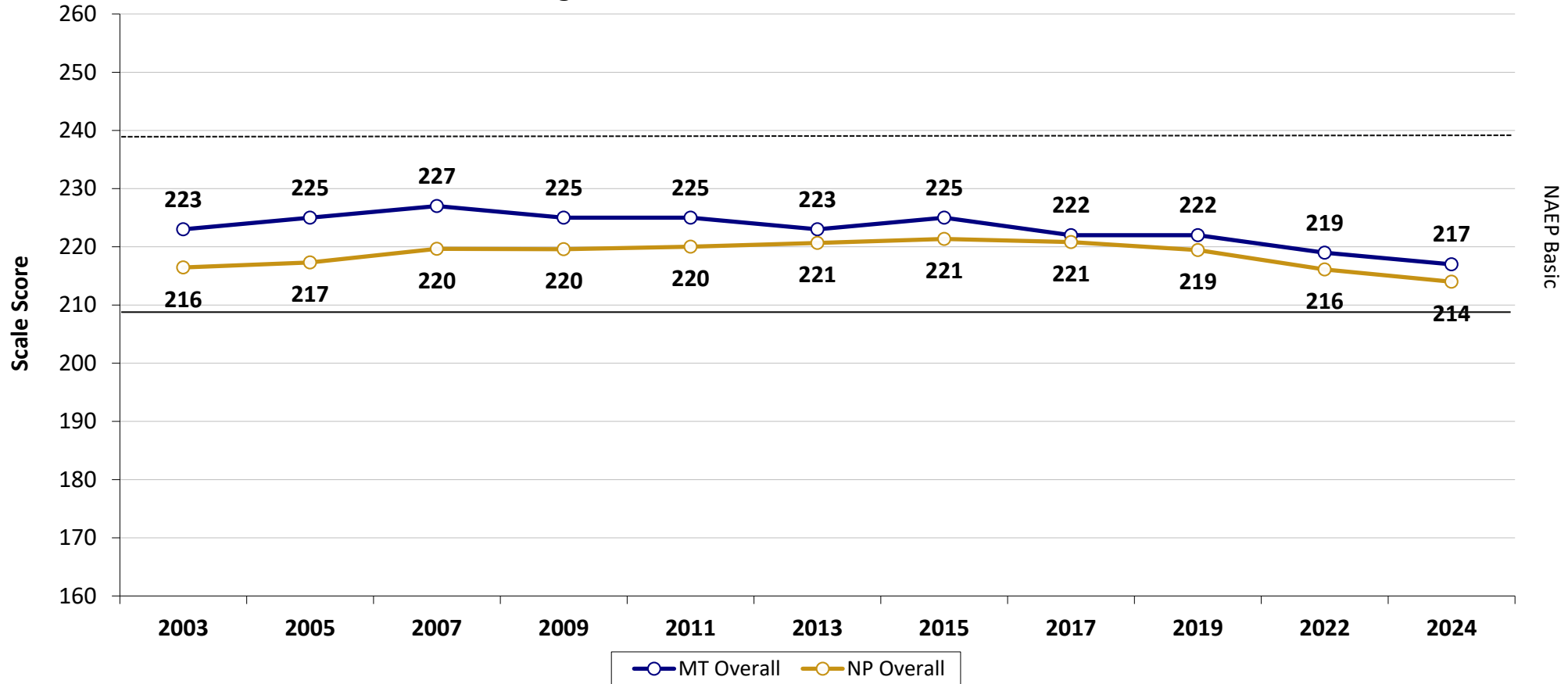
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).



# Reading – Grade 4

## NAEP Reading Grade 4 – Overall

*Average Scale Score: 2003-2024*



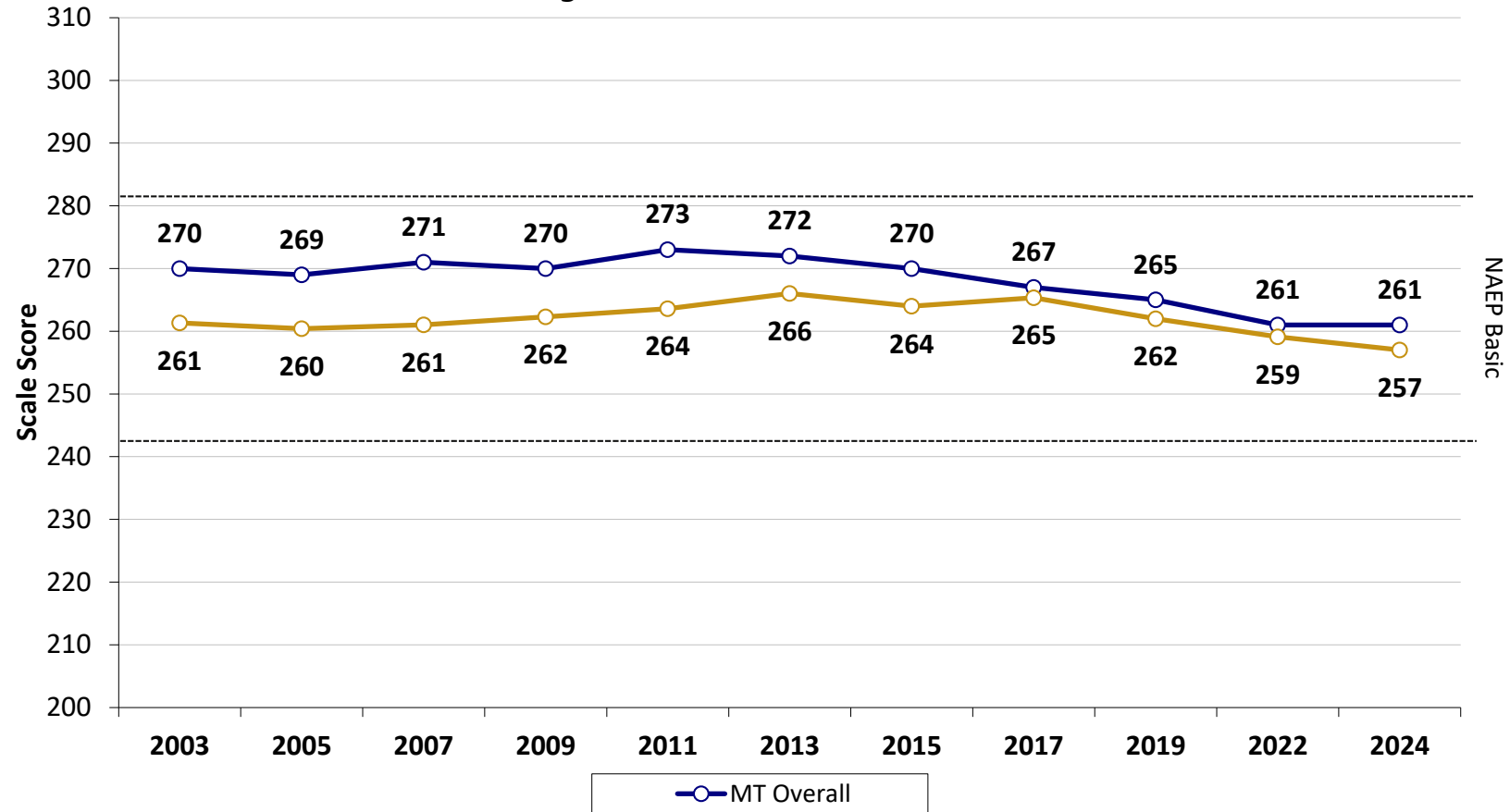
NOTE: The NAEP Mathematics scale ranges from 0 to 500. Observed differences are not necessarily statistically significant.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).



# Reading – Grade 8

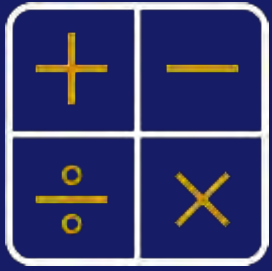
**NAEP Reading Grade 8 – Overall**  
*Average Scale Score: 2003-2024*



NOTE: The NAEP Mathematics scale ranges from 0 to 500. Observed differences are not necessarily statistically significant.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational





## Montana's Highlights

---

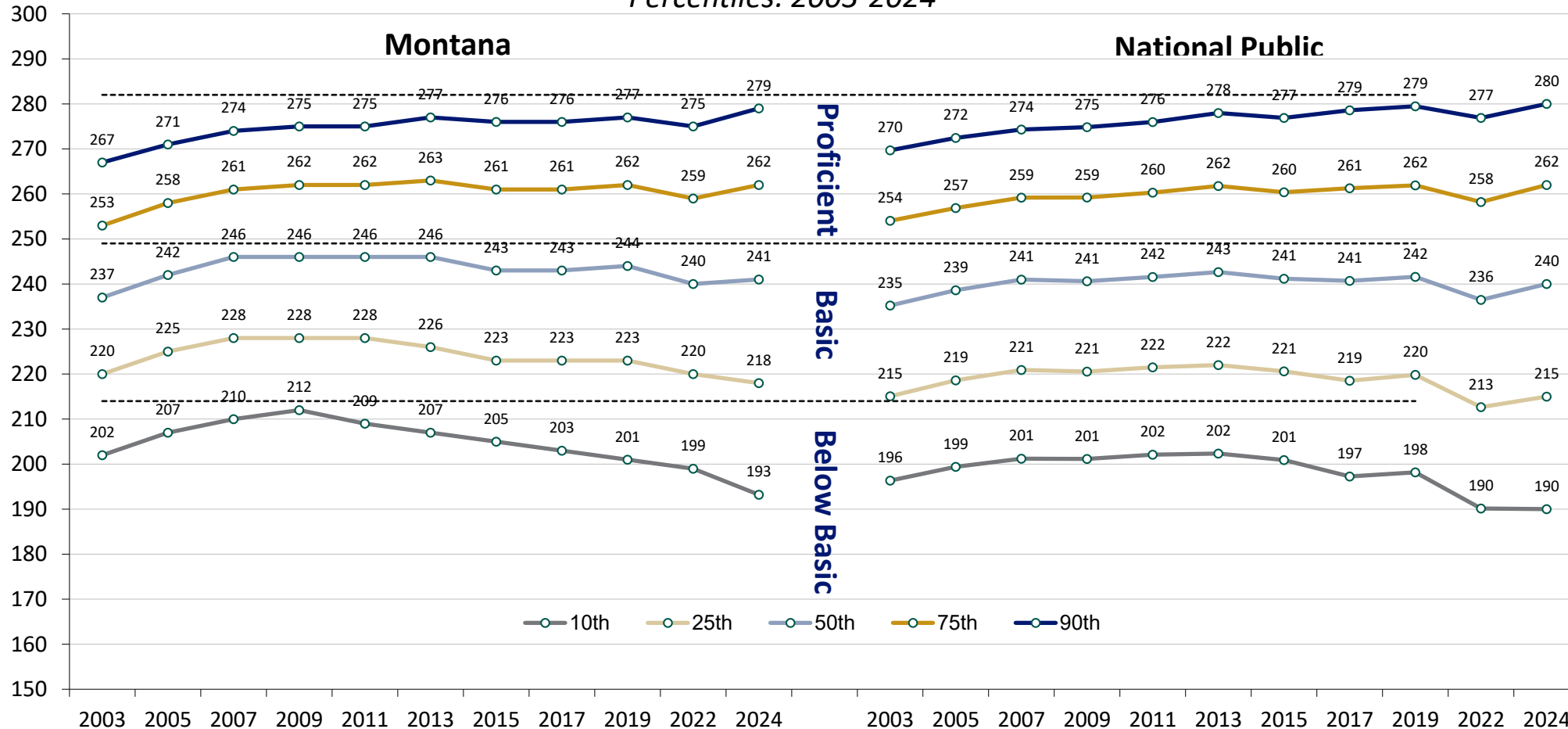
Higher performers' scores increase;  
Scores decrease for lower-performers





# Mathematics – Grade 4

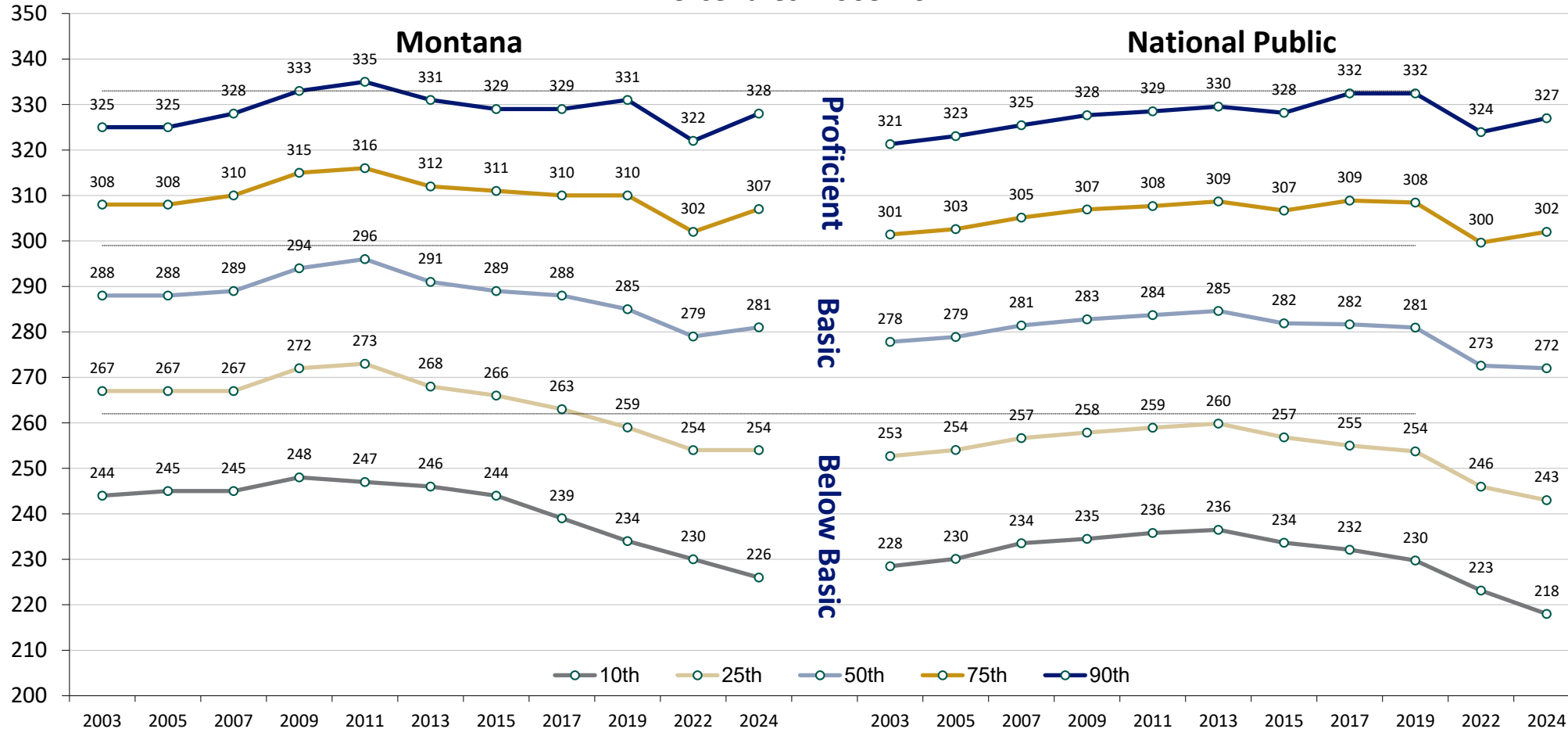
**NAEP Mathematics Grade 4**  
*Percentiles: 2003-2024*





# Mathematics – Grade 8

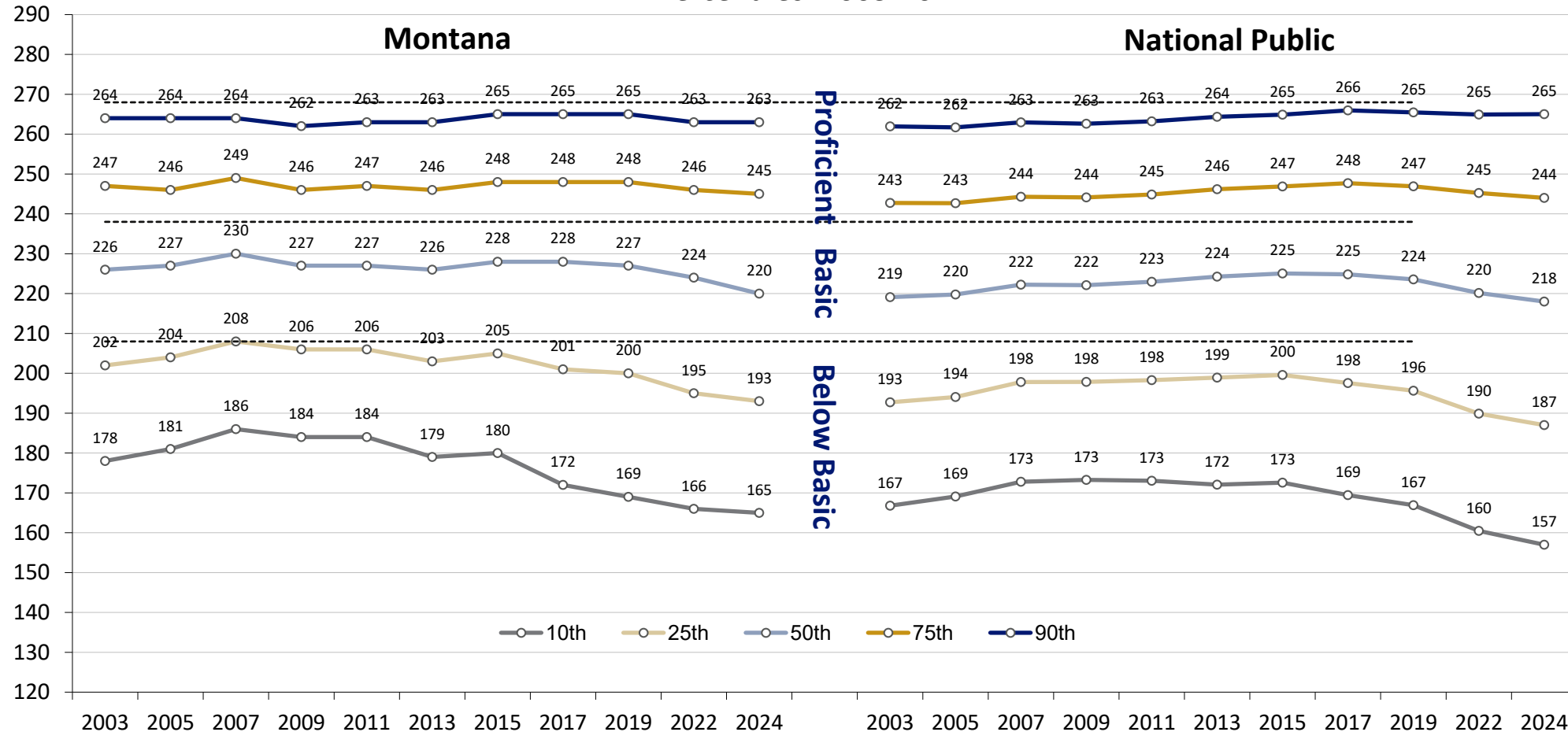
NAEP Mathematics Grade 8  
Percentiles: 2003-2022





# Reading – Grade 4

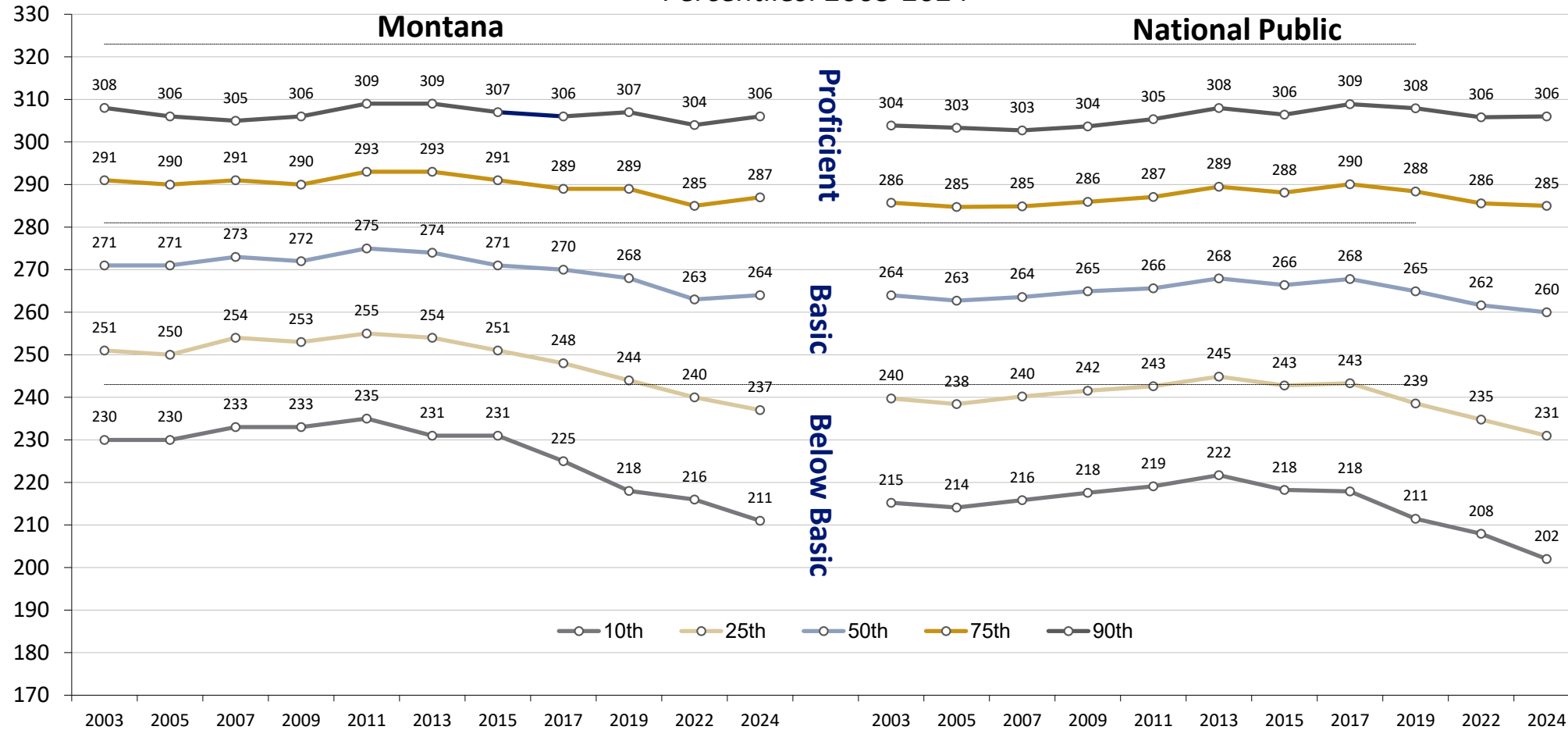
NAEP Reading Grade 4  
Percentiles: 2003-2024



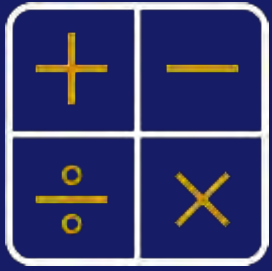


# Reading – Grade 8

NAEP Reading Grade 8  
Percentiles: 2003-2024







## Montana's Highlights

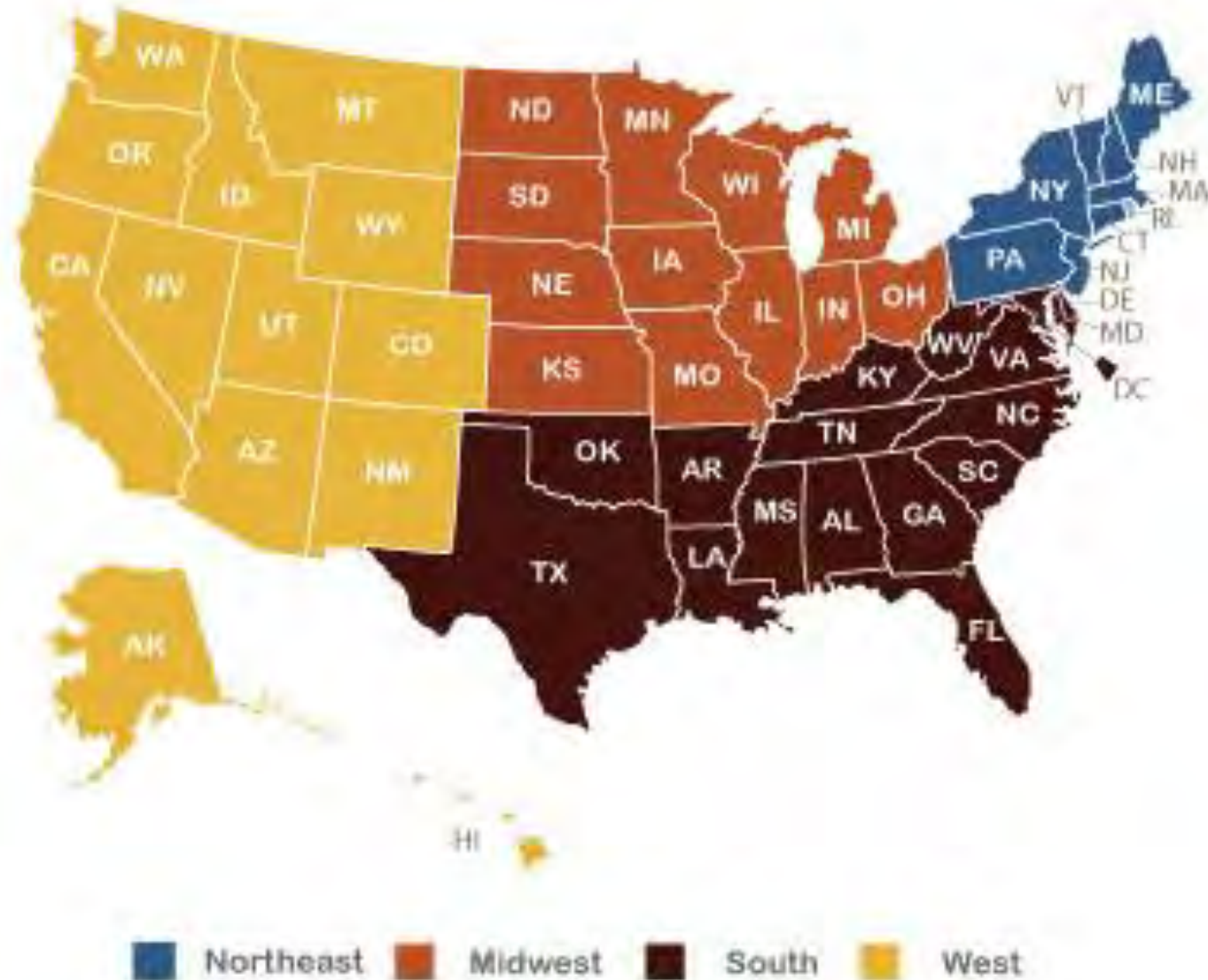
---

Montana scores well compared to West region states





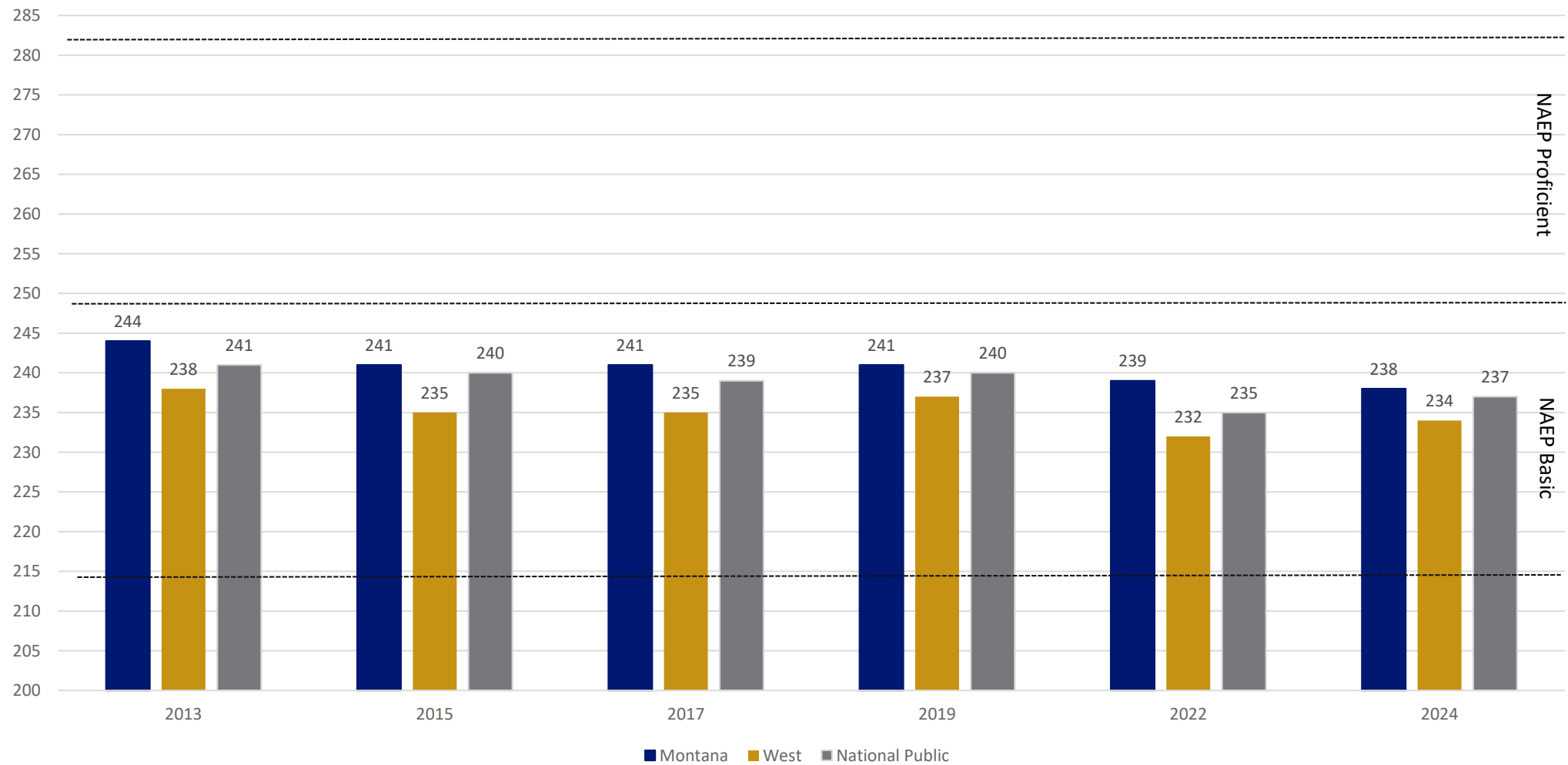
# NAEP Regions





# Mathematics – Grade 4

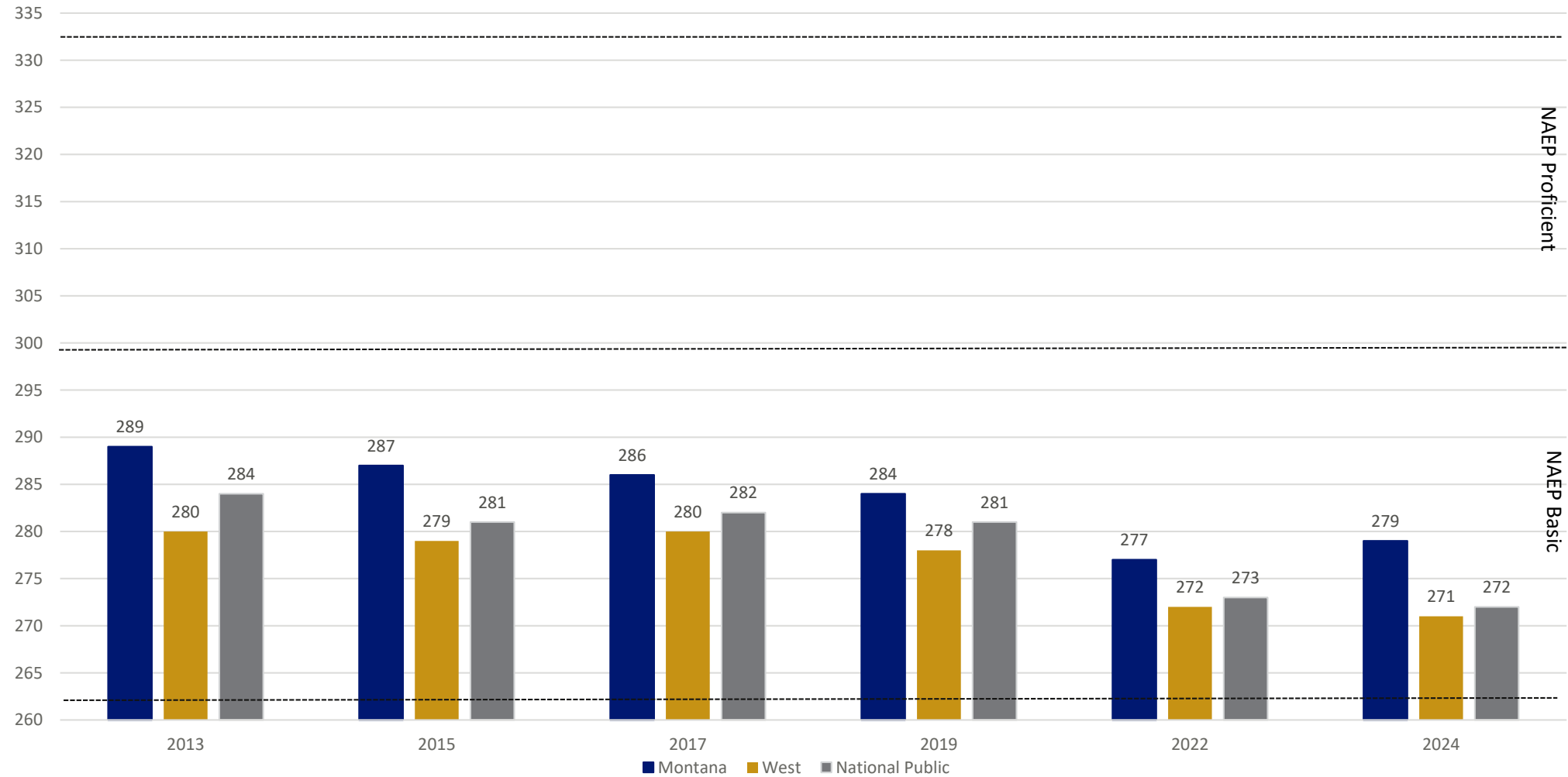
## West Region Comparisons 2024 Mathematics Grade 4





# Mathematics – Grade 8

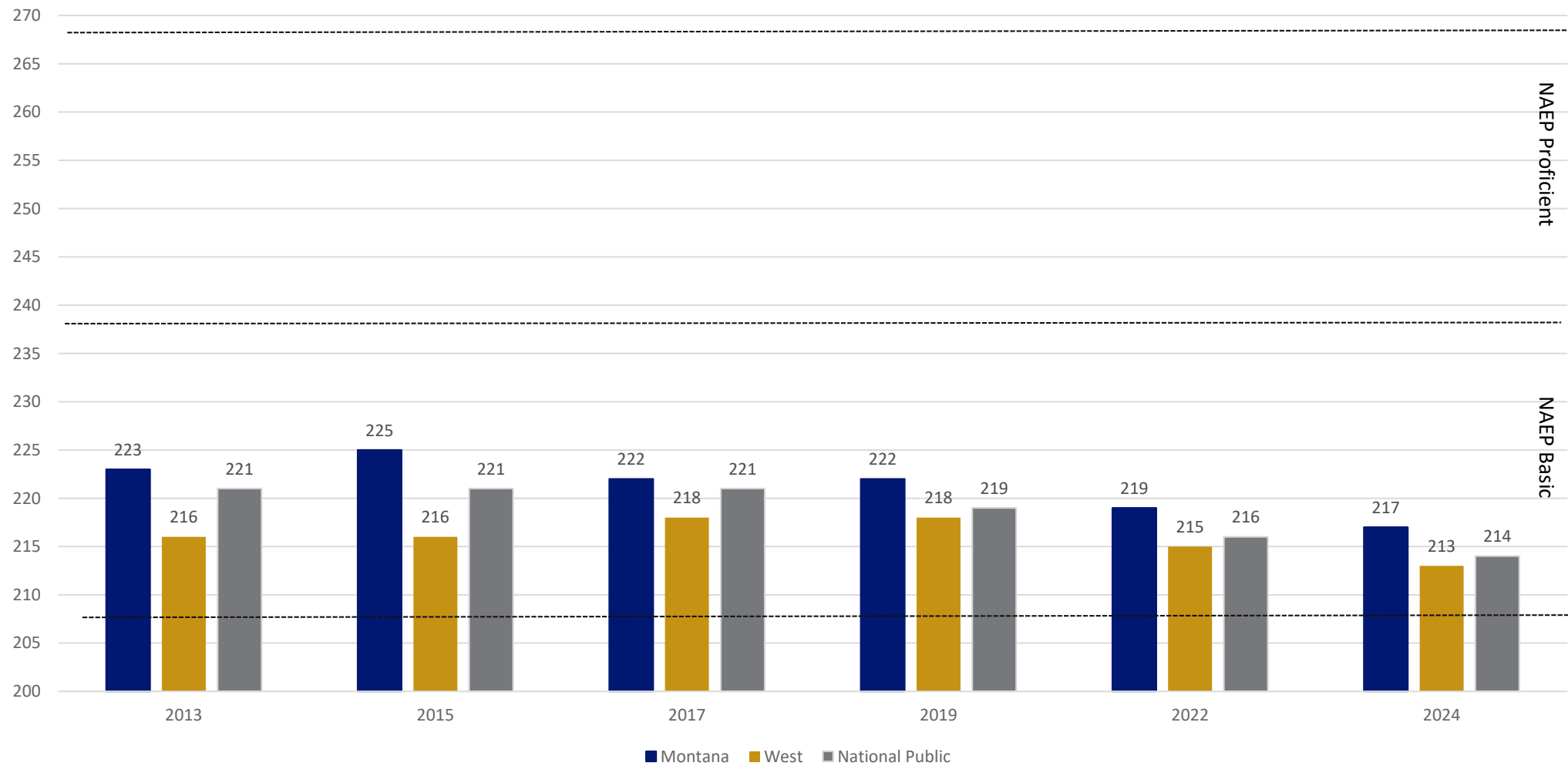
West Region Comparisons 2024  
Mathematics Grade 8





# Reading – Grade 4

West Region Comparisons 2024  
Reading Grade 4

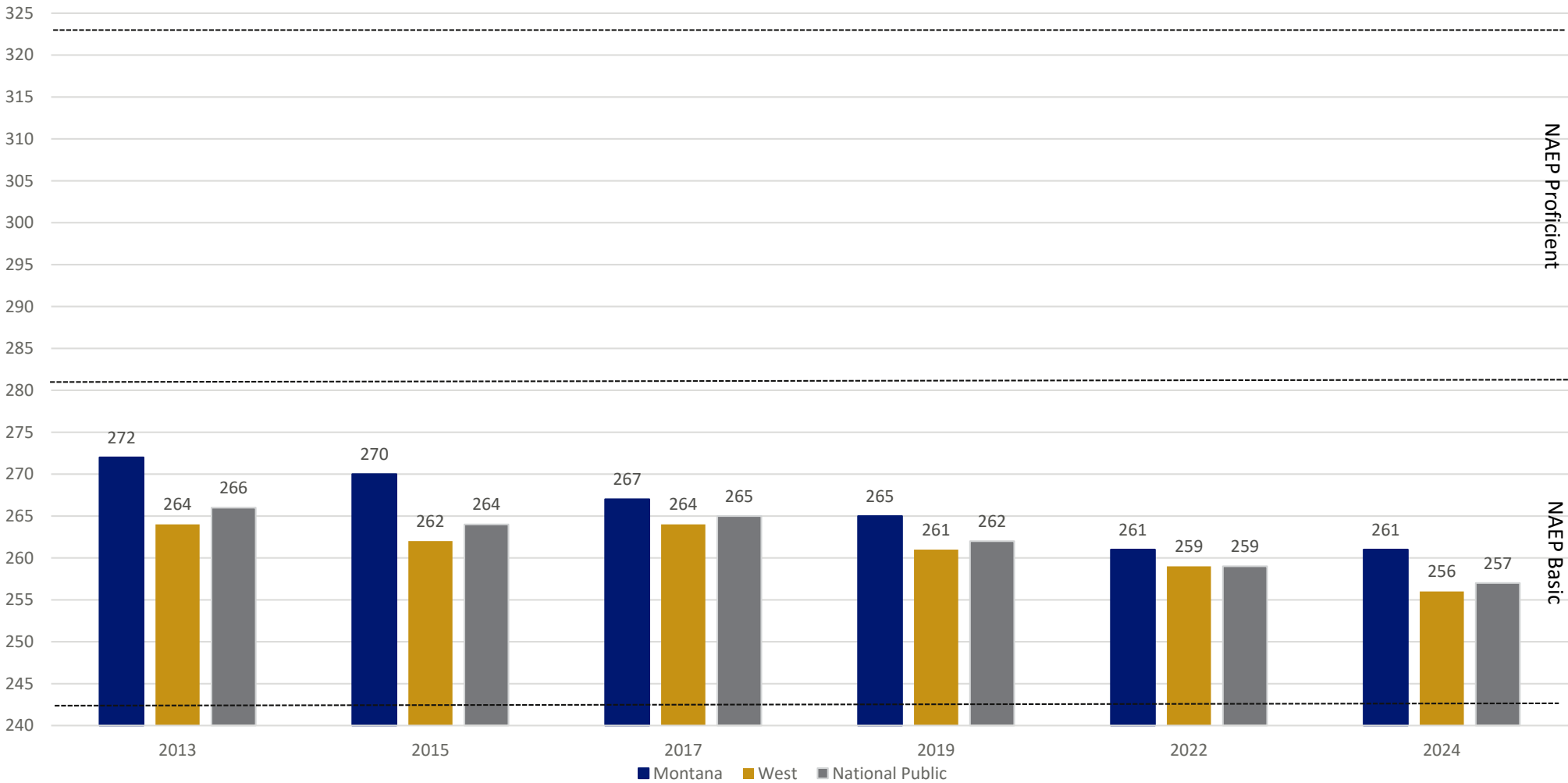






# Reading – Grade 8

West Region Comparisons 2024  
Reading Grade 8





## Subgroups/Special Studies

---

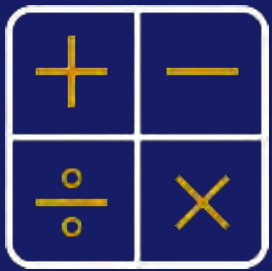
- Race/ethnicity
- Students with Disabilities (SD)
- English Learners (EL)
- Gender
- Absenteeism
- National Indian Education Study (NIES)





# National Indian Education Study (NIES)

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Indian Education (OIE).
- Fourth- and Eighth grades
- Native traditions, languages, and cultures are integrated in their everyday lives.
- Students, teachers, and school administrators
- Every four years
- NIES 2019 - <https://nces.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/report/statistical-analysis-report/national-indian-education-study-2019?pubid=2021018>.
- NIES 2024 results are expected later this year.



# Resources

---

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) - <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>
- National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) - <https://www.nagb.gov/>
- **The Nation's Report Card** - <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>
- **Montana's OPI NAEP** - <https://opi.mt.gov/Leadership/Assessment-Accountability/MontCAS/NAEP>
- National Indian Education Study (NIES) - <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nies/>



# Montana Board of Public Education Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	Federal Update
<b>Presenter</b>	Julie Murgel
<b>Position Title</b>	Chief Program Officer Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	Update on Federal Programs
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Information Item
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	n/a







## March 2025 BPE Federal Update

### Funding Updates

- The USDA notified state-level agencies that the Food Nutrition Services grants will continue as normal, and there will be no interruption in services.
- REL (Regional Education Laboratories) and Equity Assistance Centers that had contracts with ED have been terminated. ED plans to enter into new contracts to satisfy the statutory requirements, improve student learning and better serve school districts. The OPI had no direct contracts with a REL or an Equity Assistance Center
- IES (Institute of Education Sciences) also had contracts cancelled. The Superintendent is monitoring the situation for any impacts for Montana's schools.
- Eighteen federal grants funding Comprehensive Centers (CC) were removed. The grants established regional centers to provide capacity-building services to states. Education Northwest led the Northwest Comprehensive Center serving Montana, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Recently, the Northwest CC team supported the OPI in facilitating task forces for content standards revision, implementation of the Residency Program, strategic planning, and innovation in assessment.

**New leadership positions** at ED are being filled. Here is a look at some of the nominees:

- **Nicholas Kent** will serve as Under Secretary of Education. He's coming from Virginia, where he worked on higher education policy and making colleges more transparent and accountable to students and families.
- **Jennifer Mascott** has been nominated as General Counsel. She's a legal expert with experience in the Department of Justice and as a law professor. Her focus will be on legal and regulatory issues affecting education.
- **Kimberly Richey** is set to become Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. She's worked in education leadership across several states and at the Department of Education before. During both the George W. Bush administration and the Trump administration. She'll be overseeing policies related to civil rights in schools.
- **Kirsten Baesler**, who many of you may know as North Dakota's State Superintendent, has been tapped for Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education. She's a strong advocate for personalized learning and making sure students graduate ready for work, college, or the military.
- **Kevin O'Farrell** is stepping into the role of Assistant Secretary for Career and Technical Education. He's coming from Florida, where he's been focused on workforce education and apprenticeship programs. His background aligns with efforts to expand career and technical education opportunities for students.

- **Mary Christina Riley** will serve as Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Affairs. She's spent years working on education policy in Congress and will now help shape federal education initiatives.

These appointments will likely have an impact on education policy nationwide, and Superintendent Hedalen will be keeping an eye on how they shape federal initiatives that could affect Montana schools.

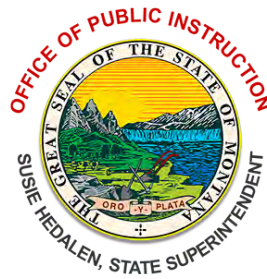
# Montana Board of Public Education

## Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

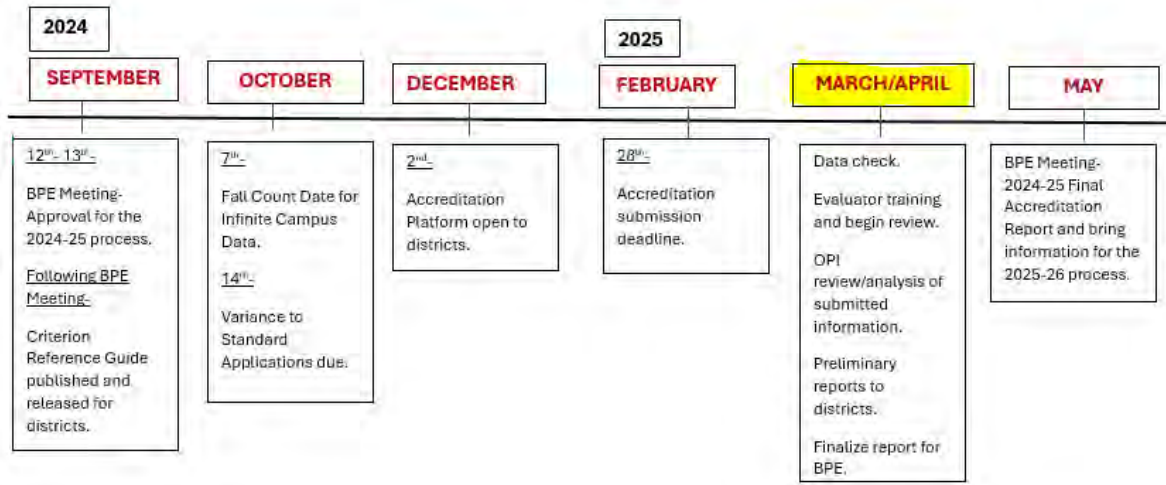
<b>Presentation</b>	Accreditation Update
<b>Presenter</b>	Crystal Andrews
<b>Position Title</b>	Accreditation and Licensure Senior Manager Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	As requested by the BPE, an update will be provided on the accreditation process for the 2024-25 school year.
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Information only
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	10.55
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	None





## Accreditation Update Board of Public Education- March

### Accreditation Timeline



### New Rubric Areas

- L- Integrated Strategic Action Plan- Graduate Profile
- M- Proficiency-Based Learning- Curriculum
- N- Proficiency-Based Learning- Assessment
- O- Educator Effectiveness- Professional Development Plan
- P- Educator Effectiveness- Mentorship and Induction
- Q- Educator Effectiveness- Evaluation
- R- Educational Opportunity- School Climate

### District/School Data

### Evaluator Review Training

- March 13-14, 42 OPI employees will gather in Helena for training
- The training includes groups completing example evidence pieces, calibrating scores, and forming meaningful comments
- Evaluator scoring will continue through mid-April, allowing the accreditation team time to review submissions and resolve any discrepancies or technical issues

### To Come

- Reviews will be complete by May Board of Public Education Meeting
- Reconvene with the think tank in March to determine cycles and the criteria reference guide for SY 25-26

# Montana Board of Public Education Executive Summary

**Date:** March 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	Content Standards Revision Updates
<b>Presenter</b>	Marie Judisch
<b>Position Title</b>	Senior Manager of Teaching and Learning Montana Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	New Platform for Content Standards Math Standards Implementation Work ELA Standards Revision Overview
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Informational Item – Superintendent’s Report
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	Content Standards, Accreditation
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	None



Montana  
**Office of Public Instruction**  
Elsie Arntzen, State Superintendent  
[opi.mt.gov](http://opi.mt.gov)





## March 2025 BPE Content Standards Update

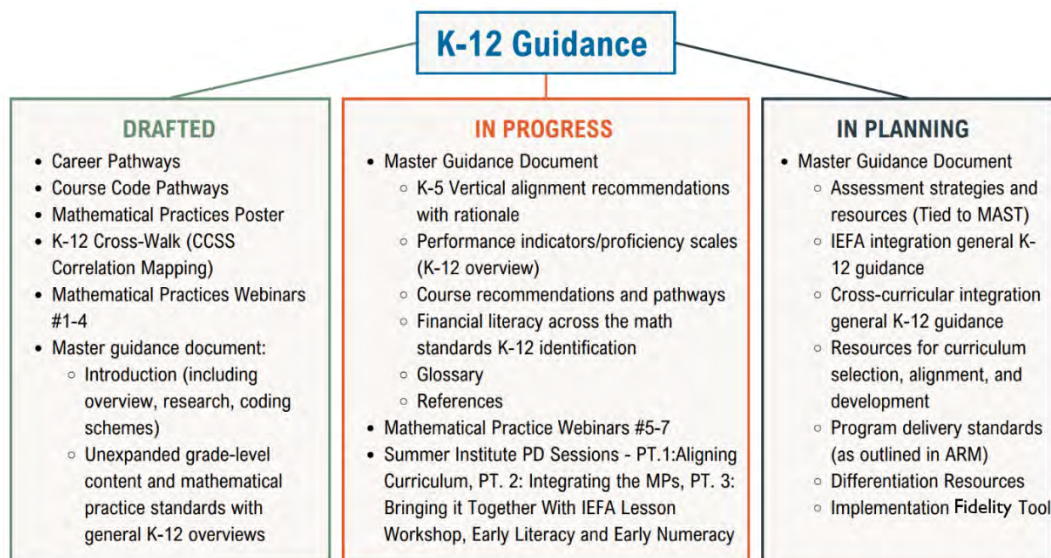
### New Hosting Platform for the Montana Content Standards

- <https://mt-satchel.commongoodlt.com/> will be launching soon!
- The Standards, Instruction, and Professional Learning (SIPL) Team is currently working on updating the newly approved standards and creating guidance documents to support the educators on this new platform.
- The platform allows educators to select the standards they are teaching for the week, see vertical alignment of the standards, associations to Indian Education for All guidance, and more!

### Mathematics Content Standards Implementation Work

As part of the implementation of the Mathematics Standards, the agency is diligently drafting guidance documents to support educators. In developing our vision for this guidance, we recognized that successful implementation requires meeting the needs of all stakeholders—not just educators, but also families, administrators, community members, and, most importantly, students. This effort goes beyond updating standards—it’s about ensuring everyone involved in a child’s education has the tools, resources, and understanding needed to support student success.

Katrina Engeldrum, the OPI’s Math Instructional Coordinator, has been leading this work by collaborating with educators across the state to understand their implementation needs. Alongside the SIPL and IEFA teams, she has begun drafting comprehensive guidance documents to facilitate the implementation process. Professional learning has already begun and will continue to be developed with educator feedback and requests. An overview of the initial guidance document development can be seen below, as well as an example of guidance on a specific kindergarten math standard.



## Example of Grade Level Content Standard *Drafted* Guidance – Kindergarten Standard

MT.K.CC.6: <u>Identify</u> whether the number of objects in one group is greater than, less than, or equal to the number of objects in another group.	
<p><b>General Notes:</b> This standard focuses on comparing two groups of objects to determine whether one group has more, fewer, or the same number of objects as the other. Students use counting and one-to-one correspondence to compare quantities and then describe the relationship using appropriate terms such as "greater than," "less than," or "equal to." Kindergarteners are not expected to use the symbols &gt;, &lt;, or =.</p>	<p><b>Instructional Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher places 7 counters in one group and 5 counters in another. Students count the objects in each group and state, "7 is greater than 5."</li> <li>Students build towers with blocks. The teacher asks, "Which tower has more blocks? Which tower has fewer?"</li> <li>The teacher shows two numeral cards (e.g., "9" and "6") and provides counters for each number. Students build groups to match the numbers and compare the quantities, stating which is greater, less, or equal.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Proficiency Scale Example:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emerging: The student is <b>not yet able</b> to identify whether the number of objects in one group is greater than, less than, or equal to the number of objects in another group.</li> <li>Developing: The student <b>can</b> identify whether the number of objects in one group is greater than, less than or equal to the number of objects in another group <b>with support</b>.</li> <li>Proficient: The student <b>can accurately</b> identify whether the number of objects in one group is greater than, less than or equal to the number of objects in another group <b>independently</b>.</li> <li>Highly Proficient: The student can accurately and efficiently identify whether the number of objects in one group is greater than, less than or equal to the number of objects in another group. They demonstrate an <b>advanced</b> understanding by being able to employ this skill in conjunction with other standards.</li> </ol>	<p><b>IEFA Integration Example: Salish &amp; Kootenai Huckleberry (Stsa) Harvesting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Context:</b> The Salish and Kootenai peoples of Montana have traditionally harvested huckleberries in late summer (August to September). Huckleberries are highly valued for their nutritional benefits and are often used in traditional recipes or preserved for winter. Harvesting is a communal activity, emphasizing sustainable practices to ensure the plants remain abundant for future generations. Families or groups collect berries in baskets, taking care to only gather what is needed and leaving enough for the ecosystem, wildlife, and future harvests.</li> <li><b>Task:</b> Students participate in a counting activity inspired by Salish and Kootenai huckleberry harvesting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Step 1:</b> The teacher sets up two groups of pretend huckleberries (e.g., counters, beads, or images of berries) to represent baskets collected by two family members. For example, one basket has 12 berries, and the other has 9.</li> <li><b>Step 2:</b> Students count the berries in each basket and compare the quantities, determining which basket has more, which has fewer, or if they are equal.</li> <li><b>Step 3:</b> Students use comparative terms such as "greater than," "less than," or "equal to" to describe the relationship between the two groups.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Connection:</b> This activity ties math skills to real-world and culturally significant practices. By learning about the Salish and Kootenai peoples' traditions and sustainable harvesting methods, students gain an appreciation for Indigenous knowledge and its integration with environmental responsibility. The comparison task also connects to the broader concept of using math to ensure fairness and resource management in communal settings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Relevant Resource:</b> <a href="#">Huckleberry Harvesting of the Salish and Kootenai of the Flathead Reservation</a>  <b>Relevant Resource:</b> <a href="#">Recipe: Huckleberry and Apple-Barley Pudding – Salish Kootenai College</a></p>

Source: Kindergarten Expanded Guidance Document **DRAFT**

## English Language Arts (ELA) and Literacy Standards:

The ELA standards are in the Negotiated Rulemaking phase of revisions. The work of the Negotiated Rulemaking Committee (NRC) began with an orientation on December 18, 2024, to prepare the committee with information to begin the process. As of February 20<sup>th</sup>, the NRC worked through all K-12 content standards as presenting by the initial task force. At the request of Superintendent Hedalen, the NRC will review additional standards to include cursive penmanship within the content standards where developmentally appropriate.

## Schedule:

Negotiated Rulemaking for ELA Content Standards - Orientation

- December 18, 4:00-6:00pm - Virtual - [Agenda](#)

Rulemaking Sessions #1, #2, #3 - Doubletree Inn - Helena, MT or [Virtual](#)

- January 6, 2025 - 12:00pm - 5:00pm - [Agenda](#) - [Recording](#) - [Minutes](#)
- January 7, 2025 - 8:30am - 4:30pm - [Agenda](#) - [Recording](#) - [Minutes](#)
- January 8, 2025 - 8:30 am - 1:00pm - [Agenda](#) - [Recording](#) - [Minutes](#)

Rulemaking Sessions #4 & 5 - [Virtual](#) Only

- January 30, 2025 - 8:30am - 12:30pm - [Agenda](#) - [Recording](#) - [Minutes](#)
- January 31, 2025 - 8:30am - 12:30pm - [Agenda](#) - [Recording](#) - [Minutes](#)

Rulemaking Sessions #6 - [Virtual](#) Only

- February 28, 2025 - 8:30am - 10:30am - [Agenda](#) - [Recording](#) - [Minutes](#)

- [NRC Working Consensus Document](#)

Public comment can be made at the end of each rulemaking session or by emailing [claire.mikeson@mt.gov](mailto:claire.mikeson@mt.gov) by 8:30 the morning of rulemaking sessions.

## Montana ELA & Literacy Standards Revision Overview

### Key Objectives of the Revision:

- **Enhancing Early Literacy:** The revised standards align with **evidence-based practices** to support students in reaching reading proficiency by 3rd grade. They emphasize the **five essential components of reading development—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension**—to ensure a strong literacy foundation.
- **Simplification & Clarity:** The updated standards reduce redundancy, use clear and concise language, and are structured for ease of use by educators, families, and the community.
- **Integration of Research:** The updates incorporate the latest research in literacy instruction, including the Science of Reading, to support effective teaching at all grade levels.
- **Literacy Practices:** Modeled after the Math Practices, new literacy practices emphasize transferable reading, writing, and communication skills essential for post-secondary success.
  - (1) Literacy practice standard 1 is to practice broad literacy engagement. Literate students routinely read a broad range of literary and informational texts for a variety of purposes.
  - (2) Literacy practice standard 2 is to practice collaboration. Literate students collaborate with others using active communication skills.
  - (3) Literacy practice standard 3 is to practice creativity. Literate students engage creatively to express their thoughts, deepen their understanding, and make connections.
  - (4) Literacy practice standard 4 is to practice critical thinking. Literate students analyze, reason, problem solve and make decisions.
  - (5) Literacy practice standard 5 is to practice cultural considerations. Literate students acknowledge and respect diverse cultural perspectives, including those of Montana Indigenous Peoples.
  - (6) Literacy practice standard 6 is to practice effective communication. Literate students routinely express their ideas through speaking and writing coherently in a broad range of literary and informational genres.
  - (7) Literacy practice standard 7 is to practice strategic technology use. Literate students effectively and responsibly use technology to access and evaluate information to express ideas.
  - (8) Literacy practice standard 8 is to practice student agency. Literate students take an active role in their learning, using guidance and feedback to connect their skills and knowledge to practical applications, college readiness, and career development.
- **Indian Education for All (IEFA):** The standards authentically integrate Indigenous perspectives, with input from Tribal Education leaders and OPI's Indian Education For All staff.
- **Restructuring for Consistency:** Standards are now organized by grade level rather than domain, and adjustments include:

- Merging Reading Literature and Informational Text standards.
- Embedding language standards into relevant reading, writing, and speaking/listening sections.
- Adding a new **Research & Inquiry** domain.
- **Guidance Documents:** Examples and elaborations have been moved to guidance documents, giving educators flexibility while ensuring essential concepts remain in ARM.
- **Enhanced Accessibility:** The standards have been refined to remove unnecessary language, improve readability, and include a glossary for key terms.

These revisions aim to support educators, empower students, and improve parent and community understanding of ELA instruction across Montana.

***For questions, please contact: Marie Judisch, [marie.judisch@mt.gov](mailto:marie.judisch@mt.gov)***

# Montana Board of Public Education Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	Annual School Food Services Report
<b>Presenter</b>	Christine Emerson
<b>Position Title</b>	School Nutrition Programs Director Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	Review of the School Foods Annual Report
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Information Item
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	n/a





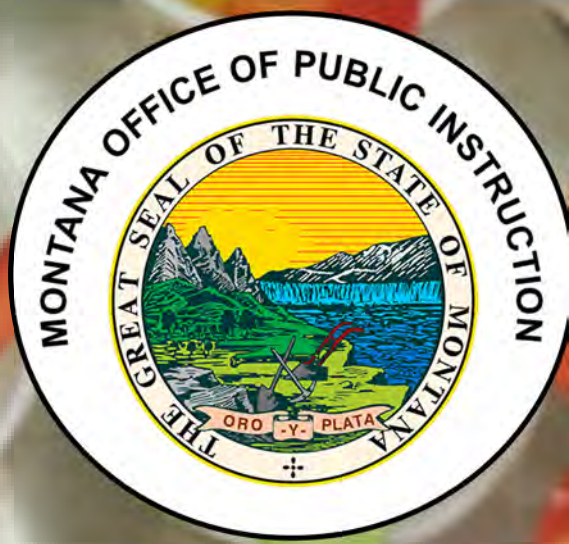


# **MONTANA**

## **SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

School Year 2023-2024

*Fueling Montana Students*







— 48.20%

OF MONTANA STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR  
FREE OR REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL  
MEALS



12.1 MILLION  
Lunches in 2024



94%

*of schools that offer lunch*  
also OFFER BREAKFAST



163

SCHOOLS OFFER FREE MEALS  
TO ALL STUDENTS THROUGH  
THE COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY  
PROVISION (CEP)



\$57,997,439

REVENUE TO MONTANA  
SCHOOLS

In school year 2023-2024, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) School Nutrition Programs (SNP) administered U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs:

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Afterschool Snack Program (ASP)
- Special Milk Program (SMP)
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- USDA Food Distribution Program (USDA Foods)
- DOD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DOD Fresh)
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- Montana Team Nutrition Program, including Farm to School
- SUN Bucks (Summer EBT) \*New program started summer 2024

School Nutrition Programs reimburses sponsors and distributes USDA Foods for meals served to children, teaches workshops for school personnel, ensures that schools implement federal regulations, and provides nutrition education for students. Sponsors include: public and private schools; government agencies; and nonprofit residential child care institutions, organizations, and camps.

### **VISION**

Empower school nutrition program professionals with knowledge as community leaders to provide equitable access to healthy meals, nutrition education, and food systems that support the success of Montana's children.

### **MISSION**

The OPI School Nutrition team collaborates with partners to provide program sponsors with training, support, and resources to strengthen program integrity and access to healthy meals.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- ✦ Children's health and academic success is furthered through community driven partnerships and solutions bringing recognition to the vital role of Montana's passionate child nutrition professionals.
- ✦ As stewards of public trust and funds, equitable resources and benefit provisions are effectively and efficiently offered with indiscriminate respect for all.
- ✦ Dedication to providing exceptional customer service by remaining responsive and adaptable to the dynamic experiences and strengths of sponsor and community partners.
- ✦ Decision making and operations management are seeded in evidence-based practices and real time data.
- ✦ Valuing continuous learning inspires ongoing professional development and leads opportunity for the celebration of progressive accomplishments.
- ✦ Training and technical assistance activities yield strengthen self-efficacy and program outcomes.
- ✦ Investments in local food sources promote sustainable food system procurement, and practices.
- ✦ Sponsor and school wellness culture is inclusive, supportive, and strengthens academic success and wellbeing.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Montana Office of Public Instruction  
School Nutrition Programs  
PO Box 202501  
Helena, MT 59620-2501  
406-444-2501

Montana Team Nutrition Program  
Montana State University  
PO Box 173370  
Bozeman, MT 59717-3360  
406-994-5641

# STAFF

## School Nutrition Programs

DIRECTOR	CHRISTINE EMERSON, MS, RD
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	ERIN TURNER, DTR, SNS
SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM SPECIALIST	SARAH KUHN, RD
PROGRAM SPECIALIST/FFVP MANAGER — MISSOULA	KELLI JOHNSON, RD
PROGRAM SPECIALIST — MISSOULA	RACHEL ARIAZ, BS
PROGRAM SPECIALIST — HELENA	SYDNEY DICKINSON, RD
PROGRAM SPECIALIST — MISSOULA	EMILY MADSEN, RD
PROGRAM SPECIALIST — BOZEMAN	ABIGAIL VANORNY, RD
FOOD DISTRIBUTION MANAGER	ERIN BENSON
FARM TO SCHOOL SPECIALIST	AMBER LYMAN, BS
DATA ANALYST	ALIE WOLF
DATA PROCESSOR	ASHLEY BODLE
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	TARREN ERICKSON
PROJECT MANAGER	BITSEY DRAUR
SOFTWARE DEVELOPER	KELLEY LARSEN

**CONTACT** Phone: 406.444.2501      Email: cemerson@mt.gov

## Montana Team Nutrition

TEAM NUTRITION CO-DIRECTOR	MOLLY STENBERG, RDN, LN
TEAM NUTRITION CO-DIRECTOR / FARM TO SCHOOL COORDINATOR	JAY STAGG
PROGRAM LEAD	HAYLEY SCOTT, MPH
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR	KYLIE CASSIDY, BA

**CONTACT** Phone: 406.994.5641      Email: stenberg@montana.edu



# — Training —

## REGIONAL OPI AND TEAM NUTRITION STAFF

OPI School Nutrition Programs and Team Nutrition have staff located around the state to better serve Montana's rural areas.

## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

**80** hours of continuing education provided by OPI School Nutrition Programs

- MT School Nutrition Association Conference (MTSNA)
- SNP Fall Workshops (in-person and online)
- Montana Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)
- Webinars

**59** hours of continuing education provided by MT Team Nutrition Program

- Montana School Meals Certificate
- Webinars

## REGIONAL OPI AND TEAM NUTRITION STAFF

OPI School Nutrition Programs and Team Nutrition have staff located around the state to better serve Montana's rural areas.

## MT TEAM NUTRITION

Montana School Meals Certificate training provided 40 hours of comprehensive professional development training in-person and virtually. Topics included meal pattern components, weekly dietary specifications, and strategies to achieve compliance with USDA rules through training on food preparation techniques, recipe standardization and crediting, school food forecasting, and procurement. Substantial mini-grant funds (ranging from \$5000 to \$7500) to support staff bonuses, staff or substitute pay, travel costs, food for student taste tests, equipment, supplies, and marketing materials





# —Grants—

**\$4,822,443 Total Grant Funds**



## **FY 2024 NSLP EQUIPMENT ASSISTANCE GRANTS**

**\$81,843**

- **21** equipment grants totaling \$81,843 were awarded to local sponsors by the OPI

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, distributed \$30 million to state agencies to competitively award Equipment Assistance Grants to eligible school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Montana was awarded 81,843. The Equipment Assistance Grants were effective in supporting SFAs by enabling them to meet equipment needs, which have continued to experience supply chain disruptions in operating school food service.

## **LOCAL FOOD FOR SCHOOLS COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT**

**November 2022—July 2024**

**\$727,981 Funds Distributed to 41 Districts**

Section 5(c) of the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act (15 USC 714c(c))

Funds provided for the purpose of purchasing domestic, locally grown foods from local producers, small businesses, and socially disadvantaged farmers/producers for distribution to schools.

# —Grants—

## **Farm to School State Formula Grant \$682,693 September 2022 — September 2026**

Section 1001 of the American Rescue Plan Act (Public Law 117-2)  
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to State agencies administering the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency (supply chain resiliency). The funds support State agency efforts to coordinate and provide technical assistance to build and increase the capacity of participating institutions to procure and use local foods in program meals as well as provide agricultural education opportunities for participating children.

## **FY 2023 Technology Innovation Grant (nTIG) \$373,134 September 2023 — September 2025**

Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (Public Law 117-103)  
Funds provided to State agencies for the purposes of developing, improving, and maintaining automated information technology systems used to operate and manage all Child Nutrition (CN) Programs.

## **FY 2024 Technology Innovation Grant (nTIG) \$746,268 September 2024 — September 2028**

Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (PL 117-328) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (PL 118-122)  
Funds provided to State agencies for the purposes of developing, improving, and maintaining automated information technology systems used to operate and manage child nutrition programs (i.e., National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program)

## **FY 2024 Direct Certification Improvement Grant \$957,836 September 2024 — September 2027**

Section 749(h)(1)(A) and (C)(i) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (Public Law 111-80)  
Funds provided to State Agencies for the purposes of implementing, maintaining, and improving high performing direct certification systems.

## **FY2024 Farm to School Grant \$454,658 June 2024 — June 2026**

Section 18(g) of the NSLA (42 U.S.C 1769(g))  
Funds provided to State agencies for the purposes to improve access to local foods in eligible schools, for activities such as Training; Supporting operations; Planning; Purchasing equipment; Developing school gardens; Developing partnerships; and Implementing farm to school programs.

## **FY 2024 Team Nutrition Training Grant \$798,030 September 2024 — September 2027**

Public Law 111-296, which amended Section 19 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966  
As authorized under Section 6(a)(3) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, 42 USC 1755(a)(3), FNS provides Team Nutrition Training Grants to support training and technical assistance for School Nutrition Professionals, nutrition education for students and their caregivers, and activities to build a healthy school nutrition environment.

# Federal Meal Reimbursement Rates



The 2023-2024 School Year reimbursement rates reflect the expiration of the temporary reimbursement rates provided under the Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022, which included an additional 40 cents per school lunch and 15 cents per school breakfast meal reimbursement. The reimbursement rates shown in the chart below include the adjustment to the base rate for School Year 2023-2024.

**SY 2023-2024 School Nutrition Programs Reimbursement Rates**  
Effective July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

School Breakfast Program	Non-severe Need		Severe Need	
Paid	0.38		0.38	
Reduced Price	1.98		2.43	
Free	2.28		2.73	

National School Lunch Program	Less than 60%	Less than 60% + 8 cents	60% or more	60% or more + 8 cents
Paid	0.40	0.48	0.42	0.50
Reduced Price	3.85	3.93	3.87	3.95
Free	4.25	4.33	4.27	4.35

Afterschool Snack Program	
Paid	0.10
Reduced Price	0.58
Free	1.17

Special Milk Program	All Milk	Paid Milk	Free Milk
Pricing Programs without Free Option	0.2625	N/A	N/A
Pricing Programs with Free Option	N/A	0.2625	Average cost per ½ pint of milk
Non-pricing Programs	0.2625	N/A	N/A

The 2024 Summer Food Service Program reimbursement rates shown in the chart below include an overall adjustment to the base rate which increased on average 5.3% from the previous year. These adjustments address changes in the Consumer Price Index, as required under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

Summer 2024 Reimbursement Rates		
Meal Type	Rural or Self-Prep	Urban or Vended
Breakfast	2.9775	2.9225
Lunch or Dinner	5.2125	5.1300
Snack	1.2350	1.2050

## SY 2023-24 PROGRAMS

	MEALS/SNACKS	REIMBURSEMENT / ENTITLEMENT
School Breakfast Program	6,172,301	\$12,570,022
National School Lunch Program	12,097,908	\$34,358,831
Afterschool Snack Program	282,282	\$299,414
Special Milk Program	22,077	\$6,084
Summer Food Service Program	1,030,250	\$4,305,659
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program	—	\$3,869,161
USDA Foods Entitlement & DOD Fresh	—	\$5,478,064
Total Grant Funds	—	\$4,822,443
<b>Totals</b>	<b>19,604,818</b>	<b>\$65,709,678</b>



# SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) provides low-cost or free breakfasts to children to help start the school day right with a healthy breakfast.

The School Breakfast Program provides reimbursement to states to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential childcare institutions. The Food and Nutrition Service administers the SBP at the federal level. State education agencies administer the SBP at the state level, and local school food authorities operate the program in schools.



**73% of Breakfast  
Meals are Served to  
Free & Reduced  
Eligible Students**



## 35,461

**STUDENTS EAT BREAKFAST AT SCHOOL EACH DAY**



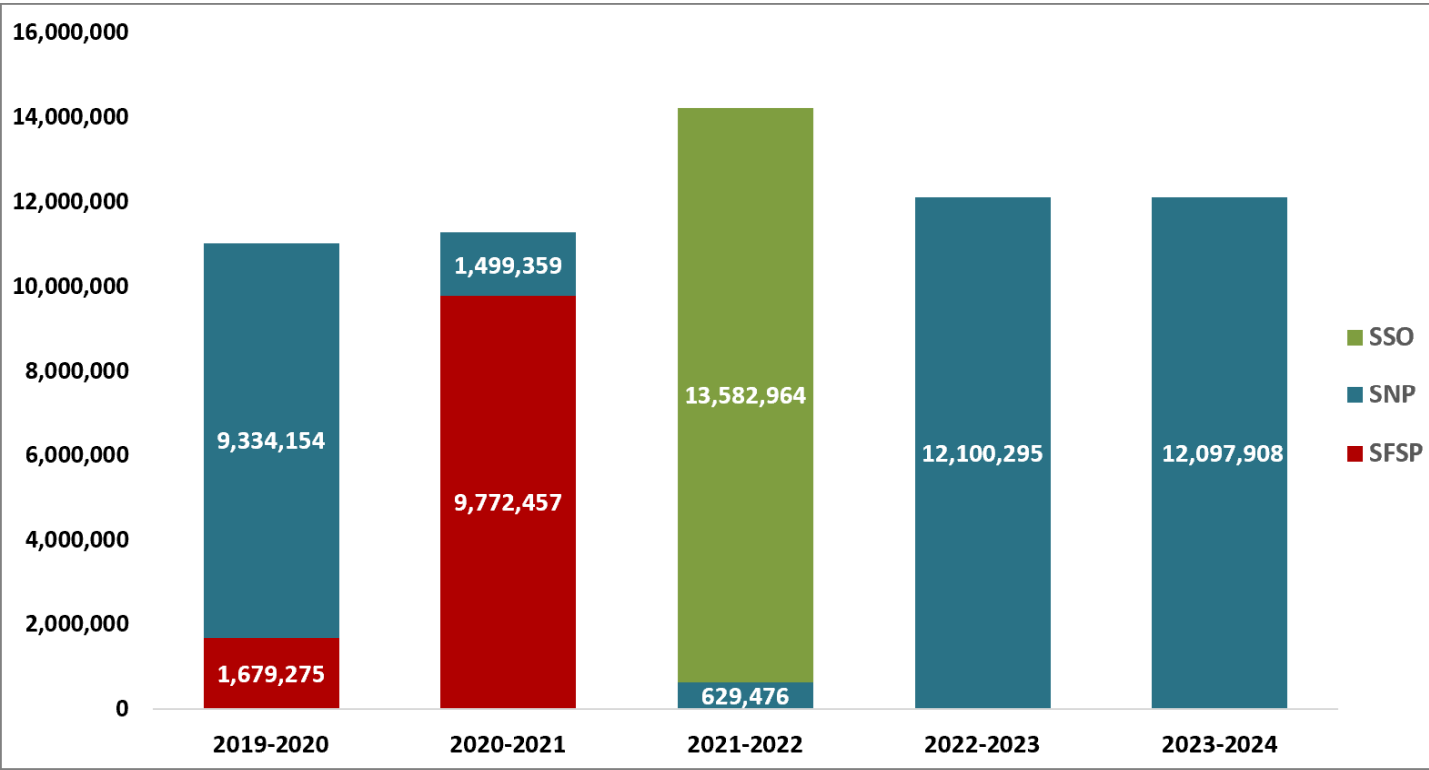
# NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the Program at the Federal level. At the State level, the NSLP is administered by State agencies, which operate the Program through agreements with school food authorities.



School Lunch Meals Served in Montana



69,944

STUDENTS EAT LUNCH AT SCHOOL EACH DAY

# FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLE PROGRAM

*The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) provides funds to elementary schools for fresh fruit and vegetable snacks during the school day.*



*Carrot Prep @ 2018 MT Cook Fresh Institute*

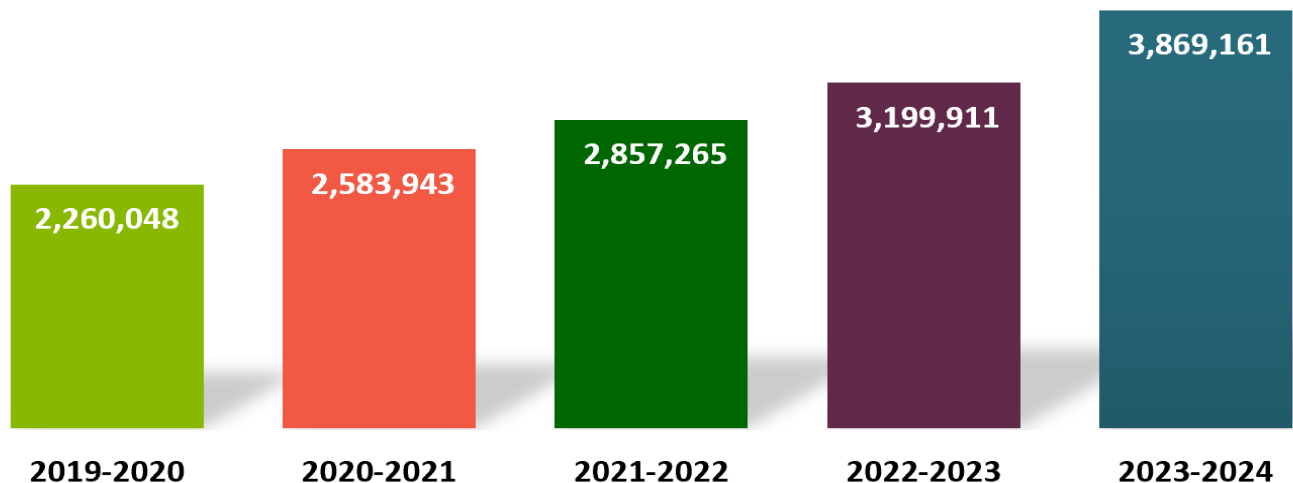
**\$63.14**

ALLOTMENT PER STUDENT

**232**

*Schools Participated in FFVP*

FFVP Allocation by School Year

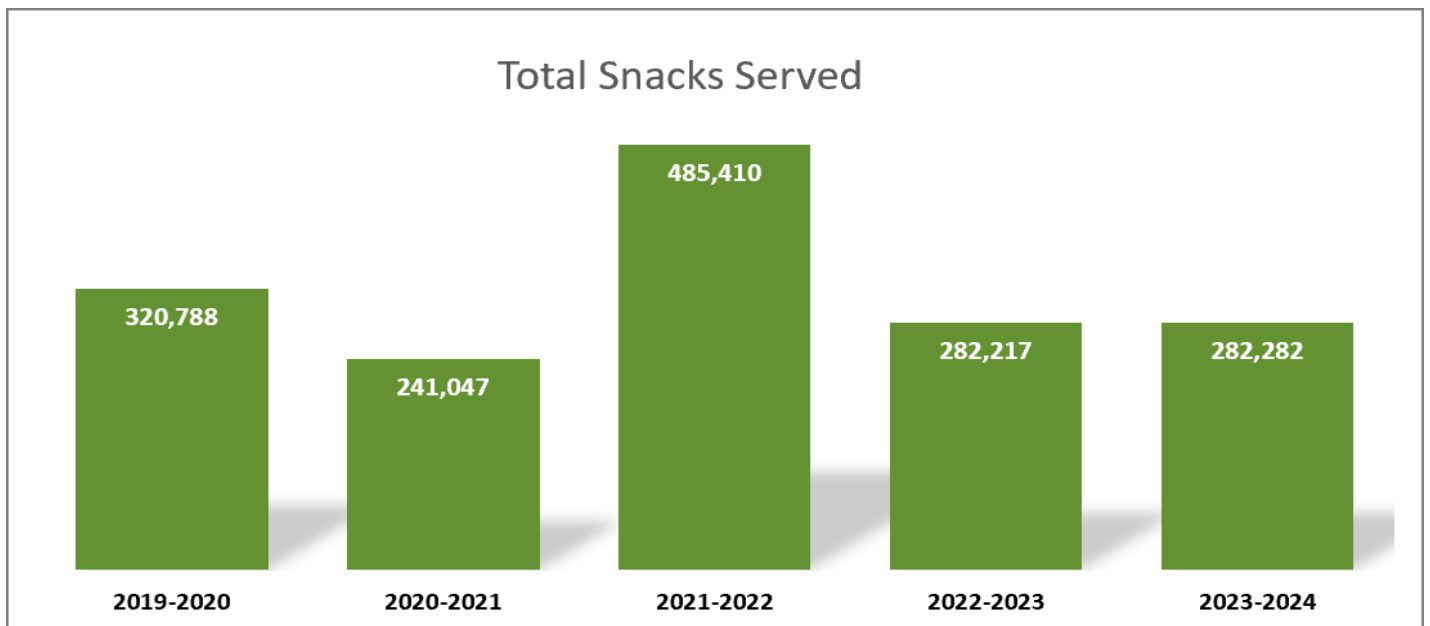


**44,950**

STUDENTS HAD ACCESS TO FFVP

# AFTERSCHOOL SNACK PROGRAM

*The Afterschool Snack Program provides snacks to students in education and enrichment activities after school.*



# 1,920

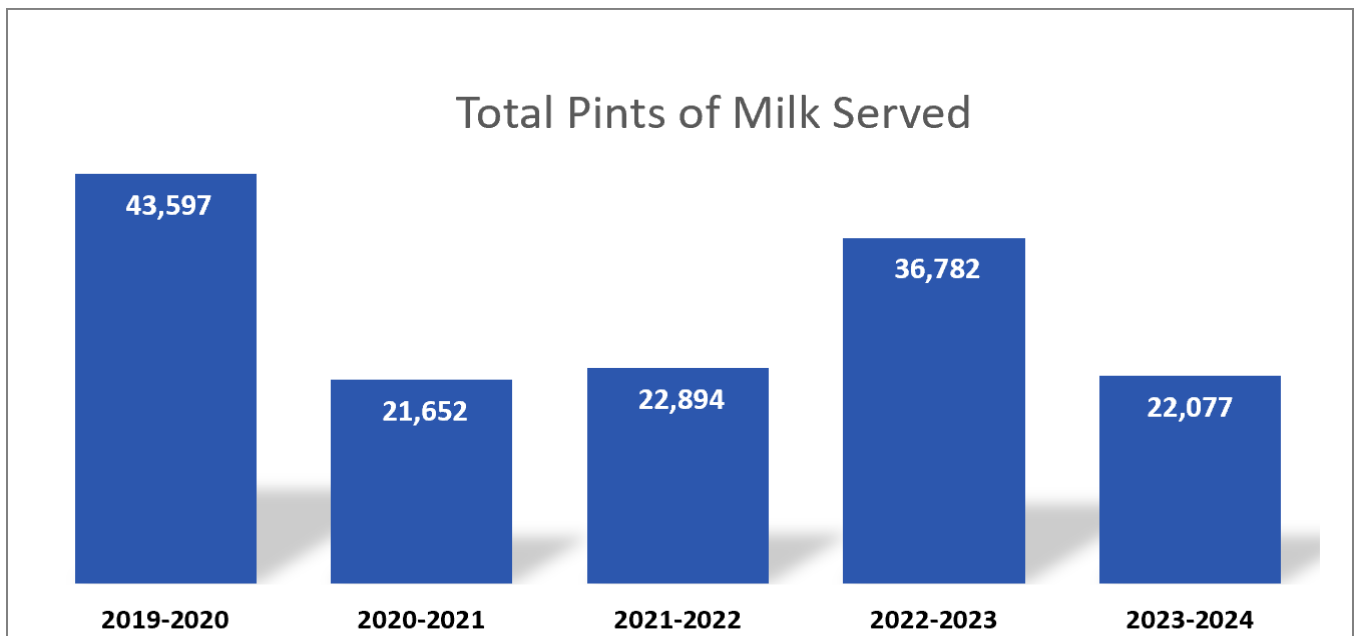
STUDENTS EAT A SNACK AFTER SCHOOL EACH DAY

# SPECIAL MILK PROGRAM

*The Special Milk Program provides reimbursement for milk served at schools that do not offer the National School Lunch Program or Summer Food Service Program.*



The Special Milk Program operates at 9 small schools that do NOT offer breakfast or lunch to students.

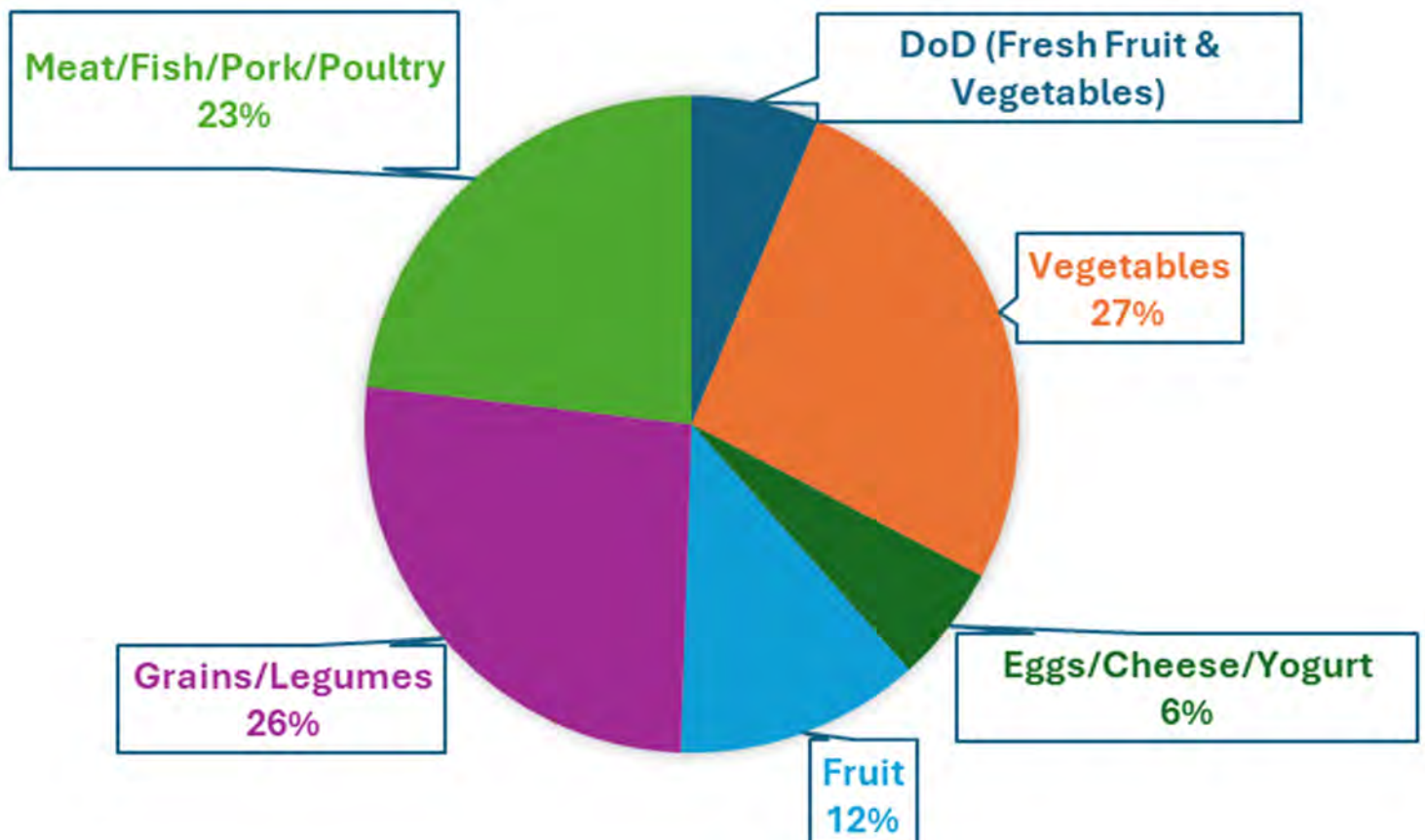


145

STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL MILK PROGRAM EACH DAY

# USDA FOODS and DOD FRESH

The USDA provides schools with USDA Foods and Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for use in preparing school meals.





# MONTANA MARINARA

**BUILDING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR  
HEALTHY AND LOCAL MONTANA LUNCHES**

**MONTANA OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
MISSION WEST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS  
NORTHWEST FOOD HUB NETWORK**



## WHAT IS MONTANA MARINARA?

Montana Marinara is the first in a line of locally sourced value-added products designed with schools in mind. By working together, we leverage each other's strengths, support hard-working Montana farmers, and expand access to affordable local food for schools.



MT OPI diverts USDA Foods canned diced tomatoes to Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center (MMFEC) in Ronan, MT.

MMFEC sources Montana-grown carrots, onions, squash, and safflower oil from the Western Montana Growers Cooperative and the Northwest Food Hub Network.



MMFEC processing staff combine USDA tomatoes and local veggies to create a veggie-packed, cost-conscious marinara sauce!

Montana Marinara is packaged and shipped to MT OPI in Helena, where it is staged to ship with USDA Foods deliveries.



MT OPI delivers Montana Marinara to schools all over the state, where it is served to students in all kinds of dishes! Meatball subs, tomato soups, chili, pasta, and so many other delicious creations have been made by talented food service staff with Montana Marinara.

## BY THE NUMBERS

In SY 2022-2023 and SY 2023-2024:

**2406**

Number of Montana Marinara cases distributed to schools

**181**

Number of SFAs that ordered Montana Marinara

**182,851**

Number of Montana Marinara servings distributed

**22,426**

Pounds of local ingredients used

**134**

Average miles traveled from MT source farm to processing facility

**\$24,538**

Dollar value of local ingredients

"I believe combining both local products and USDA Commodities is a very exciting opportunity for our state to potentially offer more locally sourced and processed items for school food service programs...The marinara is a really great product!"

-Ed Christensen, Food Services Supervisor, Missoula County Public Schools

Project funding provided by USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program, Share Our Strength No Kid Hungry Campaign, and Montana Office of Public Instruction. For more information: [anne.hamey@missionwestcdp.org](mailto:anne.hamey@missionwestcdp.org)

# SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

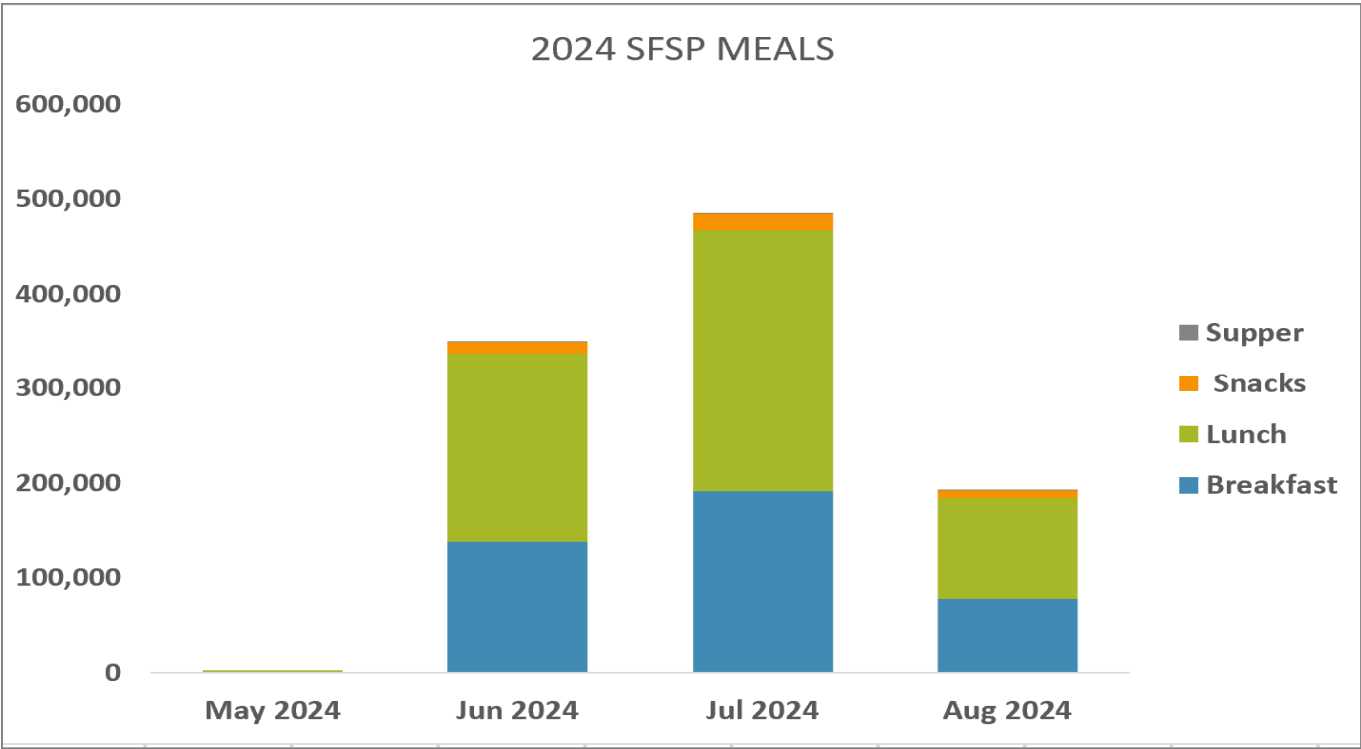
The Summer Food Service Program provides free meals to all kids, age 18 and under, during the summer months.



## 2024 RURAL NON-CONGREGATE MEAL SERVICE

125 Non-Congregate Sites

545,843 Non-Congregate Meals Served (53% of Total Meals)



100 Sponsors at 280 Sites





SUN Bucks (previously Summer EBT) is a new USDA program that began in Montana in 2024.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction and Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services administer the program together.

FY2024 Issuance:

⚙ Total Issuance Per Child: \$120

⚙ Dates of Issuance: October 30<sup>th</sup>, October 31<sup>st</sup>, November 17<sup>th</sup>, November 24<sup>th</sup>, November 29<sup>th</sup>, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

\* Issuance was delayed in the first year because of the need to procure a new EBT vendor.

⚙ Total Issuance to eligible children: \$9,155,400 (\$64.11 on a test card)

⚙ Total Number of Children Issued: 76,285

⚙ Total Number of Households Issued: 46,872



# Montana Team Nutrition

## Annual Report: July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

### Annual Report for School Year 2023 - 2024

Montana Team Nutrition organized and provided a variety of educational programs for school food service professionals throughout 2023-2024. As part of the final year of the Montana School Meals Certificate (MSMC) Program, a total of five culinary workshops, two food producer and school food service meetup events, and many webinar sessions and in person trainings at the annual School Nutrition Association (MTSNA) Conference were offered. The MSMC Program was supported by a 2022 USDA Team Nutrition grant to support new school food service directors by providing 40 hours of comprehensive professional development.

### MONTANA TEAM NUTRITION OUTREACH OUTCOMES

**103** **126** **32** **49%**

Hours of training  
offered to school  
nutrition professionals

Number of school  
districts reached

Number of training  
opportunities  
offered

Percent of School Food  
Authorities in Montana  
reached

### Culinary Trainings

An assortment of colorful and seasonal recipes designed to meet USDA Child Nutrition Program requirements were whipped up at the five culinary trainings hosted throughout the year, which reached a total of 79 school food service professionals. Attendees engaged in training on knife skills, small kitchen equipment, whole grain baking, practicing soup and salad recipes, and fruitful discussion along the way. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive with one review raving, "Loved it! Offer again and again".



*Cindy Geise, School Food Service Trainer, demonstrates how to use a produce wedger.*



*Culinary workshop participants served up a delicious oven baked falafel with tzatziki sauce.*

### Learn More

#### WEBSITE

<https://www.montana.edu/teamnutrition/contact.html>

#### FACEBOOK

[www.facebook.com/MontanaTeamNutrition](https://www.facebook.com/MontanaTeamNutrition)

#### CONTACT

Molly Stenberg  
Program Co-Director

Jay Stagg  
Program Co-Director  
F2S Coordinator

Haley Scott  
Program Lead

Kylie Cassidy  
Admin  
Coordinator

325 Reid Hall  
PO Box 173370  
Montana State University  
Bozeman MT 59717-3370

The Montana Team Nutrition Program works in close collaboration with the Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs and is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Team Nutrition Training Grant Program. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



## Montana Food for Montana Schools

Two food producer and school food service meetup and training events were held in Great Falls and Missoula, Montana. These three-hour training and networking sessions bring local food producers, food vendors, and school nutrition staff together to learn how to directly purchase and sell to one another. Over 12 different products were purchased following the events!



*Local eggs were one of the products offered to schools during the meetup event.*

## Scratch Cooking Success Stories

To conclude the MSMC program and celebrate the participating schools' accomplishments, Team Nutrition program staff visited nine schools to highlight their school meal programs. These features are titled "Scratch Cooking Success Stories" and have been shared via school newsletters, social media, and websites to recognize the stellar work of these schools' meal programs. [The scratch cooking success stories are linked here.](#)



*First grader, Walter Heimbach enjoys daily school lunch offerings at Clancy School.*



*A red velvet waffle made with beets from the school garden is the star of this delicious scratch cooked lunch at Power School.*

## Better Together

We are proud to work with Child Nutrition Professionals throughout our state to improve the health of Montana students through access to healthy school meals and nutrition education. The work we do would not be possible without the willingness of Montana school food service staff to try new programs. We learn from them, then pass that knowledge on to others. Thank you to all the schools and groups that partner with us!







# Montana Farm to School Annual Report

## Academic Year 2023-2024



2022-2023  
**61.6%**  
2021-2022  
**59.9%**  
2020-2021  
**58.6%**  
2019-2020  
**57.1%**

### OVERALL PARTICIPATION

Sites participating in at least one F2S activity

### Farm to School Participation Rates

**61.2%**  
**SCHOOL GARDENS**  
Creating and tending school gardens



## WHAT

### What is farm to school?

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by influencing food purchasing and education practices at K-12 schools and preschools. Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities through such avenues as school gardening, cooking lessons, and farm field trips. Through community-driven approaches, farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following core elements: procurement, education, and school gardens.

## WHY

### Why does farm to school matter?

Farm to school not only connects kids with locally grown food and food and nutrition education, but it helps foster resilient food systems. COVID-19 has highlighted the need for farm to school to solve food supply issues and support the local economy.



66% of students ate vegetables one or more times per day in the past seven days, according to the 2023 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

**43,778**  
An estimated **17%** of Montana children faced food insecurity in 2022, meaning they may not know how they will get their next meal.

**56%** of Montana students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Data is a 5-year average for most recent and available school years.



Agriculture remains the leading industry sector in Montana's economy, with a value of

**\$4.0 billion** in 2021. By connecting children with agriculture and exposing them to agricultural careers, farm to school initiatives are helping to prepare the next generation of farmers.

### Montana Farm to School Leadership Team

The Montana Farm to School Leadership Team works through partnerships across the state to build farm to school initiatives that help kids eat healthy, connect with agriculture and nutrition through education, support Montana farmers and food producers, foster economic vitality, and strengthen communities.

The Leadership Team consists of 15 member organizations with statewide focus and influence that are key to the success of farm to school in

Montana. The team has 7 working groups, 5 of which are open to the public. These meetings are a way for the Leadership Team to share updates, facilitate connections, gather input, and uplift local farm to school stories. To get involved, register for an upcoming meeting and/or contact the working group chair listed on the Leadership Team webpage. The Office of Public Instruction sponsors the Montana Farm to School Leadership Team. The team is facilitated by the Montana Farm to School Coordinator at Montana Team Nutrition Program.

### 2023 Member Organizations

AERO  
Mission West Community Development Partners  
Montana Agriculture in the Classroom  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
Montana Department of Livestock  
Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services  
Montana Farmers Union  
Montana No Kid Hungry  
Montana Office of Public Instruction  
Montana School Nutrition Association  
Montana Team Nutrition Program, Montana State University  
Montana State University Extension  
National Center for Appropriate Technology  
Northern Plains Resource Council  
USDA Office of Community Food Systems, Mountain Plains Region

*The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*



## Montana Harvest of the Month

Each month, participating sites focus on promoting one locally grown item (e.g., lentils) by serving it in at least one meal or snack, offering taste tests, conducting educational activities, and displaying or distributing Harvest of the Month (HOM) materials.

Herbs were featured as the newest Harvest of the Month item with Potatoes coming up next! Bison was a popular topic featured in past HOM handouts. A special team was formed to create the Buffalo materials which include Native knowledge, cultural information, and languages in order to be as inclusive as possible when promoting it in our outreach to schools.



### In school year 2023-2024



94  
registered  
schools and  
afterschool programs

21,721

children reached at K-12 and  
Early Care + Education sites



31  
registered early care and  
education sites



140 local food producers  
sold to sites



\$727,981

local foods purchased  
(not including fluid milk for K-12)

31

Trainings in  
2023-2024

### Training + Resources

There are many ways to learn about farm to school and access resources! Montana Farm to School hosts farm to school webinars and in-person trainings as well as an archive of previous trainings on the Montana Farm to School website.

56+

Hours of  
events

This year, The Montana Farm to School Summit is being held in conjunction with the MT School Nutrition Association conference. This event, June 23 – 25, 2025, will include focus topics like Local Procurement, School Gardens, and F2S Education in the classroom. There will also be a focus on Local Producers at the Vendor show.

### SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH



@montanafarmtoschool  
1,600 followers



@mtfarmtoschool  
1,500 followers



Montana Harvest of the Month  
1,584 views

### Celebrating Farm to School Month

Montana Crunch Time is a statewide event to celebrate National Farm to School Month and 'buy local' initiatives in Montana by crunching into locally and regionally grown products in October.



23,473  
people participated  
in Montana Crunch  
Time 2023

## MAKING MONTANA MARINARA

Montana Marinara is a new product developed in partnership with Montana Office of Public Instruction, Mission West Community Development Partners, and Northwest Food Hub. It enhances USDA Foods tomatoes with local veggies and herbs to create a kid-friendly, versatile, and affordable product. Schools across Montana sampled the sauce with their students in delicious meals from meatball subs to manicotti and beyond!



Mission West Community Development Partners

## GET INVOLVED + CONTACT

### Website

Find resources and information at:  
[www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool](http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool)

### Contact Us

Jay Stagg, Montana Farm to School Coordinator  
Montana Team Nutrition Program,  
Montana State University  
[jay.stagg@montana.edu](mailto:jay.stagg@montana.edu)  
(406) 994-5996

### SOURCES

National School Lunch Program Annual Sponsor Agreement Form 2024-2025, Montana Office of Public Instruction

2023 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Montana Office of Public Instruction

Map the Meal Gap: Child Food Insecurity 2023, Feeding America

Montana Agriculture Statistics, 2023

Montana Farm to School Leadership Team Participation 2022, Montana Team Nutrition

Montana Harvest of the Month Participation 2023-2024  
Montana Team Nutrition Program

Montana Farm to School Professional Development and Technical Assistance Tracker 2023-2024, Montana Team Nutrition

Montana Crunch Time Participation 2023, Montana Team Nutrition





# AND JUSTICE

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:** [Program.Intake@usda.gov](mailto:Program.Intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Want to learn more about

# School Nutrition Programs

in Montana?

**VISIT:**

[opi.mt.gov/schoolnutrition](http://opi.mt.gov/schoolnutrition)



**ITEM 4**

**COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**REPORT**

**Dr. Angela McLean**



**ITEM 5**

**GOVERNOR'S OFFICE REPORT**

**Dylan Klapmeier**

## **ITEM 6**

# **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

**Gavin Mow**

❖ **MACIE LIAISON - (Item 7)**

**Julia Maxwell**

**ITEM 7**

**MACIE REPORT**

**Jordann Lankford Forster**



MONTANA ADVISORY COUNCIL ON INDIAN EDUCATION  
ADVISORY TO THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AND  
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

**Montana Board of Public Education**  
**MACIE Summary**  
March 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	MACIE Report
<b>Presenter</b>	Jordann Lankford Forster
<b>Position Title</b>	MACIE Chair
<b>Overview</b>	<p>The purpose of MACIE is to provide recommendations and guidance to the Board of Public Education and the Office of Public Instruction on initiatives and actions aimed at increasing American Indian student achievement. As your advisory board, and partner in American Indian education improvement, we offer the following report:</p>
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	February MACIE Meeting
<b>Recommendations</b>	None

❖ **CHARTER COMMITTEE – (Items 8-10)**

**Dr. Ron Slinger**

**ITEM 8**

**UPDATE ON COMMUNITY CHOICE  
SCHOOL COMMISSION**

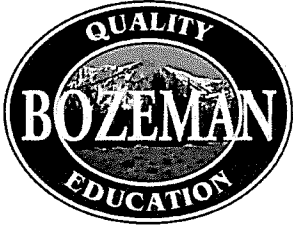
**Trish Schreiber**



**ITEM 9**

**ACTION ON THE BOZEMAN SCHOOL  
DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES'  
REQUEST FOR DISSOLUTION OF THE  
BOZEMAN ONLINE PUBLIC CHARTER  
SCHOOL**

**Superintendent Casey Bertram, Bozeman  
School District**



February 10, 2025

To Montana Board of Public Education (BPE),

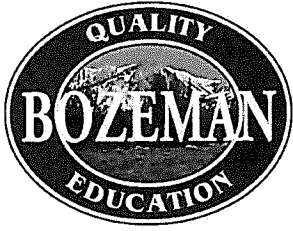
This letter is to formally request that the BPE move forward with the dissolution process for the Bozeman Charter School (BoCS). The BSD7 Board of Trustees approved the HB549 charter school application for the Bozeman Charter School on October 23, 2023. On January 19, 2024, the BPE took action to approve and deny public charter school proposals via the requirements in HB 549. The Bozeman Charter School was part of the nineteen applications that were formally approved. On February 26, 2024, the Bozeman Elementary Board of Trustees approved the BoCS Charter School Contract with the Board of Public Education. However, based upon enrollment challenges in the BoCS, the District requested a contract provision that allowed for a one-year delay in implementation of the BoCS to the 2025-2026 school year.

Student interest in the BoCS program has not materialized to a level sufficient to sustain the program. While the BoCS flexibly served a small population of students post-Covid and through the end of the 2023-2024 school year, that vast majority of BSD7 families prefer five days of in-person instruction in our brick and mortar elementary and middle schools.

We fully understand that if the BoCS is dissolved as recommended, reinstating the program will necessitate a new application to the BPE subject to the requirements in effect at that time. We appreciate your flexibility in the contract allowing for the delayed start of the BoCS, however, at this time we don't have sufficient student numbers to warrant the launch in 2025-2026. The BSD7 Board of Trustees took action to dissolve the BoCS at their meeting on January 27, 2025, and the agenda item and approved minutes from that meeting are attached.

Respectfully,

  
Greg Neil  
BSD7 Board of Trustees Chair



Meeting Date:	January 27, 2025
Category:	Action Item - Consent - Both Districts
Agenda Item #:	3.5.1
Originated By:	Casey Bertram, Superintendent
Others Involved:	Executive Cabinet

MOTION	SECOND	AYES	NAYS	ABSTAIN

**Topic:**

Consider Approval of Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) Dissolution

**Facts & Discussion:**

1. The BSD7 Board of Trustees approved HB549 charter school applications for the Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) on October 23, 2023.
2. On January 19, 2024, the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) took action to approve and deny public charter school proposals via the requirements in HB 549 (2023). The Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) was part of the nineteen applications that were formally approved.
3. On February 26, 2024, the Bozeman Elementary Board of Trustees approved the BoCS Charter School Contract with the Board of Public Education. However, based upon enrollment challenges in the BoCS, the District requested a contract provision that allows a one-year delay in implementation of the BoCS to the 2025-2026 school year.
4. Interest in the BoCS program has not materialized to a level sufficient to sustain the program.
5. If the Charter School is dissolved as recommended, reinstating the program will necessitate a new application to the BPE subject to the requirements in effect at that time.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Trustees dissolve the Charter Contract for the Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) and direct administration to complete the steps necessary to complete this dissolution.

**Other Alternatives:**

1. Do not approve the recommendation and request administration propose changes.

BOARD MEETING, BOARD OF TRUSTEES, SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7 AND HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Open Session

DATE: January 27, 2025

TIME: 5:45 p.m.

PLACE: Willson Board Room

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Greg Neil, Chair  
Kevin Black, Vice Chair  
Lei-Anna Bertelsen  
Lauren Dee  
Gary Lusin  
Melissa Moran  
Tanya Reinhardt  
Sandra Wilson

MEMBERS

ABSENT: None

STAFF

PRESENT: Lacy Clark, Director of Business Services/District Clerk  
Pat Strauss, Director of Human Resources  
Mike Van Vuren, Deputy Superintendent  
Mike Waterman, Executive Director of Business and Operations  
Lori Ross, Executive Assistant

VISITORS: 20

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. by Chair Neil. Following the Roll Call and the Pledge of Allegiance, Neil welcomed visitors and explained the purpose of the meeting and the procedures to be followed.

**2.3.1 2024 BHS Football All-State Individuals**

Trustee Moran recommended that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution. Trustee Wilson seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0.

WHEREAS: The Bozeman High football team finished the season with a 6-4 record and advanced to the first round in the State AA Football playoffs; and

WHEREAS: Earning 1st Team All-State honors are

- Brady Casagranda
- Simon Harbour
- Evan Huguen

THEREFORE: Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees recognize and honor the Bozeman High Football 1st Team All-State Individuals Brady Casagranda, Simon Harbour, and Evan Huguen.

**2.3.2 2024-2025 Gatorade Montana Volleyball Player of the Year**

Trustee Wilson recommended that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution. Trustee Lusin seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0.

WHEREAS: Gatorade Company has named Gallatin High Volleyball Player and member of the AA State Championship Volleyball Team, Cadence Lundgren, as its 2024-2025 Gatorade Montana Volleyball Player of the Year; and

WHEREAS: Cadence is a two-time First Team All-State selection, four-time Academic All-State selection, 2024 Eastern Conference Player of the Year, and finished her high school career with 932 kills and 415 blocks;

THEREFORE: Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees recognize and honor Cadence Lundgren as the 2024-2025 Gatorade Montana Volleyball Player of the Year.

**2.3.3 2024-2025 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**

Trustee Reinhardt recommended that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution. Trustee Dee seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0.

WHEREAS: Gatorade Company has named Gallatin High Cross Country runner and member of the AA State Championship Cross Country Team Claire Rutherford, as its 2024-2025 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year; and

WHEREAS: Claire won a third straight Class AA individual title at the 2024 State AA Cross Country championship and was the top Montana finisher at the Nike Cross Northwest Regional Championships; and

WHEREAS: Claire also received the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award;

THEREFORE: Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees recognize and honor Claire Rutherford as the 2024-2025 Gatorade Montana Girls Cross Country Player of the Year.

**Consent Agenda Minutes, High School District, and Both Districts**

Trustee Black moved that the Board of Trustees approve items #3.4.1 and 3.4.2. Trustee Bertelsen seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0.

**3.4.1 Consider Approval of 2024-2025 Superintendent Evaluation**

**3.4.2 Consider Approval of LRSP Student Well-Being Goal and Action Plan**

**Public Comment:**

- Danielle Nicholas

**Consent Agenda Elementary District**

Trustee Lusin moved that the Board of Trustees approve items #3.5.1 and 3.5.2. Trustee Reinhardt seconded the motion. Motion carried 7-0.

**3.5.1 Consider Approval of Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) Dissolution**

**3.5.2 Consider Approval of Nonresident Students**



**5.5 Legislative Update**

Mike Waterman, Executive Director of Business and Operations, updated the Trustees and led a discussion on Montana and congressional legislation that may affect the District's operations.

Waterman answered the Trustees' questions.

**6. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items**

- None

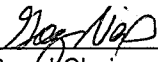
**7.1 Executive Cabinet Reports**

- None

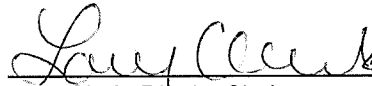
**7.2 Board of Trustees**

- Trustee Lusin asked who will attend the Day of Advocacy in Helena on January 29, 2025.

Meeting adjourned at 6:41 PM



\_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Neil, Board Chair



\_\_\_\_\_  
Lacy Clark, District Clerk

**ITEM 10**

**ACTION ON THE JEFFERSON COUNTY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES'  
REQUEST FOR DISSOLUTION OF THE  
JEFFERSON ACADEMY PUBLIC CHARTER  
SCHOOL**

**Superintendent Erik Wilkerson, Jefferson  
County School District**



## Jefferson High School

PO Box 838, Boulder, MT 59632

District Office  
406-225-3740  
Superintendent – Erik Wilkerson  
Business Manager – Lorie Carey  
Maintenance – Kyle Lyons  
Activities Director – Sarah Layng

School Office  
406-225-3317  
Principal – Mike Moodry  
Counselor – Devyn Ottman  
School Secretary – Leah Keough

February 19, 2025

Dear Chair Tharp and Members of the Board, (BPE)

This letter is to formally request that the BPE move forward with the dissolution process for the Jefferson Academy Charter School. The Jefferson High School District #1 Board of Trustees approved the school application for the Jefferson Academy on September 19, 2023. On January 19, 2024, the BPE took action to approve and deny public charter school proposals via the requirement in HB 549. The Jefferson Academy was part of nineteen (19) applications that were formally approved. However, based on enrollment issues, the District requested a contract provision that allowed for a one-year delay in implementation of the Jefferson Academy to the 2025-2026 school year.

Due to student enrollment issues at the Youth Dynamics facility, we are unable to sustain the program. Although we have a high number of at-risk students in Jefferson High School, we cannot meet the 41-student enrollment threshold.

We understand that if the Jefferson Academy Charter School is dissolved, as recommended, a new application will be required to reinstate the program. We appreciate the opportunity to have a delayed start to accommodate the student enrollment requirement, but we do not foresee having enough students in the near future. The Jefferson High School Board took action to dissolve the Jefferson Academy at their regular meeting on February 18, 2025, and the agenda item and approved minutes from that meeting are attached.

Respectfully,

Camilla Robson  
Jefferson High School Board of Trustees Chair

# MINUTES Jefferson High School Dist. 1 Board of Trustees

February 18, 2025

Regular Meeting

**Board members present in-person:** Camilla Robson, Erika Morris, Justin Willcutt, Corey Eveland, Lyndsey Graham (on phone), Larry Rasch (on phone)

**Board members absent:** Clint Rieder

**Administrators/clerk present:** Erik Wilkerson-Superintendent, Mike Moodry-Principal, Lorie Carey, Business Manager

**Staff and Visitors Present:** Sarah Layng (AD), Devyn Ottman (Counselor), Rory Rasmussen, Bryn Jeske, Conor Reilly (Monitor)

**A. Call to Order** The meeting was called to order by Ms. Robson - chair, at 5:30 p.m.

**B. Announcements and Public Comment.** Please see information printed on the back of the agenda and in the brochure at the entrance to the meeting about speaking to the board during this time.

**C. Consent Agenda**

ITEM	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	Notes
Minutes	Ms. Morris	Mr. Wilcutt	6	0	
Claims and Accounts	Mr. Willcutt	Mr. Eveland	6	0	
Construction payments	Ms. Morris	Mr. Wilcutt	6	0	

**D. Staff Report.** Ms. Ottman shared her experience with forecasting 25/26 enrollment from her visits to area elementary schools.

**E. Student Report.** – Rory Rasmussen briefly reported on the activities of Student Council. Approved BPA Valentine Cookie fundraiser, Organizing JHS days

**F. Committee Reports** – None.

**G. Administration Reports** – The board briefly reviews the written reports provided in the board packet. Some specific, anticipated items are listed below. The Board will not act on items in a report unless the item appears as an action item in the new or unfinished business sections of the agenda.

1. Clerk/Business Manager. No questions.
2. Principal/A.D. Discipline numbers decreased. Phone calls (3) from community members expressing concern about students driving off campus. District Basketball will be this coming weekend. Spring sports numbers look promising.
3. Superintendent – Reported about the furnace that overheated. The fire department showed up and Mr. Lyon (custodian) was able to address the issue with them.

**H. Unfinished Business- Action is always possible for Unfinished Business items.**

**I. New Business – Action is always possible for New Business items.**

1. Construction/Renovation update. No bids have been received yet.
2. Personnel
  - a. Substitutes –J. Guay

ITEM	Motion	Second	AYE	NAY	Notes
Approve	Ms. Morris	Mr. Wilcutt	6	0	Pending background check

b. Volunteers – Michael Silvonon and Nathan Heinitz submitted applications to volunteer to help with tennis.

ITEM	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	Notes
Approval of volunteers	Mr. Wilcut	Mr. Eveland	6	0	Pending background checks

c. Resignations – None

d. Staff employment recommendations – golf coach Mr. Moodry as assistant with possible share with Mr. Brower

ITEM	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	Notes
Moodry/Brower team	Ms. Robson	Ms. Morris	6	0	

3. Attendance agreements.

Attendance	Motion	Second	AYE	NAY	Notes
Approval for 0 JHS attendance					
Approval for 0 AYA attendance					
Acknowledge 3 out-of-district	Mr. Eveland	Mr. Wilcutt	6	0	

4. Call for Trustee and Levy Election

ITEM	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	Notes
Call for Election	Ms. Morris	Mr. Eveland	6	0	

5. Retirement Incentive discussion. The budget for this year did not include funds for an incentive. Mr. Wilkerson did not have anyone approach him about retiring either.

ITEM	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	Notes
No motion made					

6. Heard Scholarship discussion. April 1 Due date. The Clerk will publicize it. Mr. Moodry suggested that the MUS scholarships come out in March, and it would be a good time to verify receipt of full tuition. (That is one disqualification for the Heard Scholarship.)

ITEM	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	Notes
No motion needed					

7. Adopt 2025/2026 Calendar

ITEM	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	Notes
24/25 Calendar	Mr. Willcut	Mr. Eveland	6	0	

8. Charter School discussion. Due to student enrollment issues at the Youth Dynamics (YBGR) facility, we are unable to sustain the Jefferson Academy Charter School. Mr. Wilkerson recommended the Board dissolve the Jefferson Academy and will send a letter to the Board of Public Education to inform them of this decision.

ITEM	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	Notes
Dissolve the application	Ms. Morris	Mr. Wilcutt	6	0	

**J. Communication and Comments**

a. MT School of the Deaf and the Blind

**K. Commendations**

Mr. Moodry was commended for his work on the wrestling tournament JHS hosted in Butte. Ms. Ottman was commended for her work with the area elementary schools.

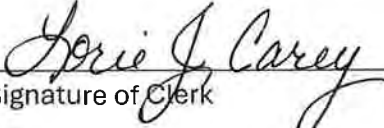
**L. Follow-up/Adjournment – upcoming months**

a. Next meeting – March 18, 2025 @ 5:30 p.m.

b. Bus purchase, STARS act, non-voted levy notification

**M.** Adjournment - meeting adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

  
Signature of Chair

  
Signature of Clerk



❖ **ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – (Item 11)**

**Madalyn Quinlan**

**ITEM 11**

**JOINT ACCREDITATION PROPOSAL**  
**WORK SESSION**

**Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI**  
**Crystal Andrews, OPI**  
**Daniel Sybrant, COGNIA**

❖ **BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION TOURS**

- 1:00 PM      EARLY LITERACY TARGETED  
INTERVENTION CLASSROOM TOUR  
Eastgate Elementary School  
4010 Gradestake St, East Helena, MT**
- 1:45 PM      EAST HELENA 227 ACADEMY MIDDLE  
SCHOOL TOUR  
227 Academy, East Valley Middle School  
400 Kalispell Ave N, East Helena, MT**
- 2:15 PM      EAST HELENA 227 ACADEMY HIGH  
SCHOOL TOUR AND ROUNDTABLE  
DISCUSSION  
227 Academy, East Helena High School  
2760 Valley Dr, East Helena, MT**

**\*\*\*\*\*TIME CERTAIN AT 3:15 PM\*\*\*\*\***

**❖ LICENSURE COMMITTEE – (Items 12-13)**

**Dr. Ron Slinger**

**ITEM 12**

**ACTION ON INITIAL REVIEW OF BPE**  
**CASE #2025-01, REGER**

**Aislinn Brown**

**ITEM 13**

**ACTION ON CONTESTED CASE HEARING**  
**BPE CASE #2024-09, EVANS**

**Aislinn Brown**

**\*\*\*\*\*CLOSED SESSION\*\*\*\*\***

**❖ EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – (Items 14-15)**

**Dr. Tim Tharp**

**ITEM 14**

**DISCUSSION OF YELLOW  
KIDNEY SETTLEMENT**

**Aislinn Brown**

**\*\*\*\*\*OPEN SESSION\*\*\*\*\***



**ITEM 15**

**ACTION ON YELLOW KIDNEY  
SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT**

**Dr. Tim Tharp**

***MARCH 12, 2025***

**CALL TO ORDER**

- A. Pledge of Allegiance**
- B. Roll Call**
- C. Statement of Public Participation**
- D. Welcome Visitors**

❖ **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – (Item 16)**

**Dr. Tim Tharp**

**ITEM 16**

**PRESENTATION ON ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION**

**Dr. Jason Neiffer**

❖ **MSDB LIAISON – (Item 17)**

**Lisa Schmidt**

**ITEM 17**

**MSDB REPORT**

**Paul Furthmyre**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- **Action on Out of State Travel Requests**
  - **Action on Personnel Items**
- **Action on 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading MSDB 2025-2026  
School Calendar**

**Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind  
Board of Public Education Report  
March 2025**

**Agenda Action Items:**

1. [Personnel Action Report](#)
  - 15 Hires
  - 1 Retirements
  - 3 Resignations
  - 1 Probationary Layoff
2. **Out of State Travel Requests**  
[AASA Authentic Family Engagement](#)
3. **Final Reading for 25-26 School Calendar**  
[Calendar B](#)

**Attached Documents:**

- [MSDB Committee Bi-Monthly Meeting Agenda](#)
- [MSDB Committee Bi-Monthly Meeting Minutes](#)
- [2/25/25 Financial Statement](#)
- [Cottage February Report](#)
- [Current Numbers](#)
- [Referral Status](#)
- [Outreach DHH Map](#)
- [Outreach VI Map](#)



**MSDB Personnel Action for BPE Meeting  
March Meeting 2025**

MSDB asks that the board please approves the following personnel actions:

**Hire**

Donovan Williams - FT Custodian I  
Jay Kromarek – PT Custodian I  
Jillian Young - Teacher of the Deaf (August 25)  
Kylie Hall - Residential Adv. 1  
Katie Halling - Family Advisor  
Cathy Copeland - Family Advisor  
Naomi Witham - Traves- Family Advisor  
Andrew Kauffman - Deaf Mentor  
Tearra Donovan - Deaf Mentor  
Amanda Kauffman - Deaf Mentor  
Mutzi Brown - Deaf Mentor  
Brenda LeMieux - Deaf Mentor  
Char Harasymczuk - Deaf Mentor  
Tyler Hansen - Deaf Mentor  
Lisa Gault - Deaf Mentor

**Resignation**

Devany Book - Public Relations Specialist 1  
Erin Faulkner - Cottage Counselor  
Donovan Williams - PT Custodian I

**Retirement**

Emily LaSalle - DHH Outreach Consultant

**Probationary Layoff**

Leah Buska - Paraprofessional

**Nonrenewal of Nontenure Teacher**

---

**Positions currently advertised**

2 - Teacher of the Deaf Outreach Consultant  
1 - Teacher of the Deaf  
1 - Teacher of the Visually Impaired  
Paraprofessional  
Public Relations Specialist

**Positions to be advertised**

2 - Residential Advisor 1  
Cottage Counselor  
Licensed Practical Nurse

**Positions on hold as a result of bargaining**

## STATE OF MONTANA

REQUEST AND JUSTIFICATION  
FOR OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

1) Agency Number/Name School for Deaf and Blind		2) Division Administration	
3) Org Number	4) Name of Person(s) Traveling/Employee ID# Paul Furthmyre		

## 5) Justification

Superintendent Furthmyre has been involved with a year long program studying family engagement with The School Superintendent Association. This is the culminating event of the program. The training will focus on the following: School Culture and Belonging: Learn to create a school environment where every family feels a strong sense of community and belonging. Championing Engagement: Explore effective strategies to empower families to take an active role in their child's education and development. Breaking Barriers to Involvement: Discover ways to overcome challenges that prevent families from fully engaging in their child's education.

## 6) Itinerary

**Destination:** Douglas County Schools, Georgia

**Travel Dates:** April 1-5

## 7) Estimated Costs

Transportation \$ 900	Meals \$ 315	Lodging \$ 728	Other \$ 900
-----------------------	--------------	----------------	--------------

Total estimated cost \$ 2843

Provide details to support estimated costs:

(Example: registration, taxi, etc. Provide Hotel Name and Phone Number if your Agency requires this information)

Other includes registration \$400 and ground transportation of \$500.

Transportation includes flight.

8) Submitted By	Title	Date
<i>Paul Furthmyre</i>	Superintendent	3/1/25

## Approval of Authorized Agency Personnel per Department Policy

Supervisor	Date	Administrator	Date
Dept. Head/Designee	Date		

**NOTE: A travel expense voucher form must be filed within three months after incurring the travel expenses, otherwise the right to reimbursement will be waived.**

REVISED 11/17

## STATE OF MONTANA

REQUEST AND JUSTIFICATION  
FOR OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

<b>1) Agency Number/Name</b> Montana School for the Deaf & Blind		<b>2) Division</b> Outreach	
<b>3) Org Number</b>	<b>4) Name of Person(s) Traveling/Employee ID#</b> Miranda Briggs/063629; Michelle Cross/040197		

**5) Justification**

Attending the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB) Outreach Forum to connect and collaborate with other professionals in working with students with visual impairments. This conference is designed for outreach directors and outreach consultants from across the nation to come and learn together by building community with other professionals in the field of visual impairment/blindness.

**6) Itinerary**

**Destination:** Grand Rapids, Michigan

**Travel Dates:** Wed. April 30 - Sat. May 3, 2025

**7) Estimated Costs**

Transportation \$ 1500	Meals \$ 188	Lodging \$ 255	Other \$ 500
------------------------	--------------	----------------	--------------

Total estimated cost \$ 2450

Provide details to support estimated costs:

(Example: registration, taxi, etc. Provide Hotel Name and Phone Number if your Agency requires this information)

Conference Registration \$250 x 2 = \$500

United Flight GTF-GRR \$600; United Flight HLN-GRR \$600

Airport transfers/Taxi/Lyft/parking fees \$300

Hyatt Place Grand Rapids Downtown \$85 night/3 nights = \$255 (if booked by April 1, room shared)

Meals (out of state) 2 lunch per person @ \$19; 2 dinner per person @ \$28; \$188 (most meals are provided by the conference)

<b>8) Submitted By</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Michelle Cross</i>	VI Outreach Consultant	3/3/2025

**Approval of Authorized Agency Personnel per Department Policy**

Supervisor	Date	Administrator	Date
Dept. Head/Designee	Date		

**NOTE: A travel expense voucher form must be filed within three months after incurring the travel expenses, otherwise the right to reimbursement will be waived.**

REVISED 11/17



# 2025-2026 MSDB SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR B

www.msdbmustangs.org  
3911 Central Avenue  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
Phone: 406-771-6000



Yellow—PIR Orientation  
Green—Travel  
Blue—MSDB event  
Orange—End of Quarter  
Striped—Travel/No School  
Pink—Break  
Plum—Holiday  
Teal—Family Learning Weekends  
Red/ Purple—Camps

August 2025						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

September 2025						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October 2025						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November 2025						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December 2025						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January 2026						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March 2026						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April 2026						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2026						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 2026						
SU	M	TU	W	TH	F	SA
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

## AUGUST

18-19 New Staff Orientation  
20-22 PIR Orientation  
25 First Day of School

## SEPTEMBER

1 Labor Day No School  
(Cottages Open)  
12 Travel Home  
15 Travel Return /  
Classes in Session

## OCTOBER

15 Travel Home  
16-20 Teacher Convention  
19 Travel Return

## OCTOBER cont.

20 Classes Resume  
\*29 End of 1st Quarter

## NOVEMBER

25 Travel Home  
26-29 Thanksgiving Break  
No School

## DECEMBER

1 Classes Resume  
10 Gallaudet Day  
18 Winter Program  
19 Travel Home  
Dec 20-Jan 3 Winter Break

## JANUARY

4 Travel Return  
5 Classes Resume  
19 MLK Jr Day No School  
(Cottages Open)  
PIR  
20 Classes Resume  
\*20 End of 2nd Quarter

## FEBRUARY

13 Travel Home  
16 Travel Return  
School NOT in session  
17 Classes Resume

## MARCH

12 Travel Home  
16 Travel Return/PIR  
GFPS is in Session  
17 Classes Resume  
\*27 End of 3rd Quarter

## APRIL

1 Travel Home  
2-5 Spring Break  
6 Travel Return  
7 Classes Resume

## MAY

8 Travel Home

## MAY cont.

11 Travel Return/  
Classes in session  
25 Memorial Day  
No School  
29 Graduation 2:00PM

## JUNE

4 Last Day of School  
\*End of 4th Quarter  
5-7 VI FLW  
12-14 DHH FLW  
14-20 Deaf Camp  
21-27 VI Camp

Approved by —: Month 00, 2025  
Updated: 12/10/2024



MSDB / BOPE Bi-Monthly Meeting Agenda  
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Date: 2/27/2025

Attendees:

Meeting Objectives:

- Provide BOPE Information about all MSDB Programs
- Seek guidance from the BOPE

Future Agenda Items:

Program	Agenda Items	Items Needing Follow-Up
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Personnel Action Plan</a></li> <li>• Out of State Travel                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 2025 - 2026 School Calendar                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Calendar A</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Calendar B</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">GFPS Calendar</a></li> <li>○ Vote</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Finalsite Enrollment</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Inquiry Form</a></li> <li>• Application Link Form</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Finalsite Webpage</a></li> <li>• Carryford Plans</li> <li>• OPI Accreditation</li> <li>• <a href="#">Policy Website Project</a></li> <li>• Staffing Concerns                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Outreach Duty Days</li> <li>○ Negotiations due to STARS</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Foundation Update</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Items Needed                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Personnel Action</li> <li>○ Out of State Travel</li> <li>○ 2nd Reading of 25-26 Calendar</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Business Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">2/25/25 Financial Report</a></li> <li>• Major Repairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ FICO - HVAC Repairs in Jan - \$922.55</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities</li> <li>• Travel - 3 remaining</li> <li>• <a href="#">February Newsletter</a></li> </ul>	
Education: School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Current Numbers</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Referral Status</a></li> <li>• ELVS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ 911 Call Center/MANG</li> <li>◦ Veterinary &amp; Pediatric Dentistry Presentations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recent Screenings held on campus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Dental</li> <li>◦ Vision - worked with local Lions Club</li> </ul> </li> <li>• PIR 1/20/2025 - Dr. Marie Alcock</li> <li>• Observers on campus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ TVI 2/12-2/13</li> <li>◦ Kent State Interpreter 3/10-3/14</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Up-coming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ OPI Monitoring 3/3</li> <li>◦ Read Across America 3/3-3/6 &amp; 3/11(author Suzette Bruggeman presenting)</li> <li>◦ Showdown Skiing 3/13</li> <li>◦ Flying Hooves traveling to Utah 3/26-3/30</li> <li>◦ Spring CED 4/4-4/5</li> <li>◦ Spring Program 4/15</li> <li>◦ Spring/Easter Activity with MAFB 4/16</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Education: Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added link to MSDB web page for referrals to DHH Outreach Consultant.</li> <li>• Updated maps on the website for DHH consultants regions.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with DPHHS. They are hosting training sessions and getting materials that support HB 619.</li> <li>• Outreach Consultants hosting events in regions around the state to bring the deaf community together.</li> <li>• Family Learning Weekends are in the initial planning stages.</li> <li>• A combined campus/cottage/outreach team is planning the spring Campus Enrichment Days (CED), formerly VIEW and DEW. They are incorporating the Expanded Core Curriculums in a Kentucky Derby theme.</li> </ul>	
--	---	--

## **Board of Public Ed Meeting**

### **BOPE Meeting - Summary – February 27, 2025**

Those in attendance - Paul Furthmyre, Tim Tharp, Lisa Schmidt, Jim Kelly, Julie-Dee Alt, Miranda Briggs, McCall Flynn, Julia Maxwell, Hannah Nieskens

Introductions Absent - Donna Schmidt

Note Taker – Paula Mix

### **Approval of Agenda**

#### **Meeting Objectives:**

- Provide BOPE information about all MSDB Programs
- Seeking guidance from the BOPE

### **Administration - Paul**

- Paul did Introductions of our New Board members - Julia Maxwell, Hannah Nieskens
- Paul reported that the school was successful in hiring (1) Teacher of the Deaf, (1) PT Custodian 1, (1) FT Custodian, (1) Residential Adv. 1, (3) Family Advisors, (8) Deaf Mentors who work with our Deaf students. The board will be asked to accept one DHH Outreach Consultant retirement. We have (3) resignations, (1) probation layoff
- ParaProfessionals - Sec. E we did submit an amendment for (2) more but it was not approved. Mrs. Hall from OBPP has indicated there is an avenue we could look at to cover these positions. We did receive funds for the Education Interpreter Training for the next two years. Schools will be eligible for the Quality Educator Payment
- He reported that the school will be sending (2) staff to the CPI training and AASA - Authentic Family Engagement Conference for the Superintendent. Asking the board to approve the Out of State travel for both of these.
- Asking the board to adopt next year's School Calendar at the March meeting.
- Paul then presented Finals site Enrollment- the Inquiry Form and Application Form, will help with the referral process, this program will send reminders of missing documents needed to complete the process. The Finals site Web Page to go live in April
- Paul shared the new Policy Website that has been launched. This will also be posted on our Webpage.
- He shared our Carryforward Plans - purchasing a new oven for the kitchen, Snow Blade, Computers and laptops for Outreach Consultants and battery packs for our new servers.
- OPI Accreditation, only concern is with Indian Ed for All - specific to spending

funds for this. We don't receive funds for Indian Ed for All like other schools do.

- Paul reported that the Foundation will be hosting the Bowling Alley Grand Opening next week and will also have a Meet and Greet on Mar. 6, inviting 50 people, breakfast and presentations.
- We will also have the NCMASS meeting here Mar. 4 another opportunity to have people on campus.

#### **Business Office - Donna absent, Paul reported**

- Paul went over the financial report and has no concerns at this time. He did explain that some of the BCD's were posted so the numbers are not showing a negative balance. Did have to make some repairs on the HVAC in January.

#### **Residential - Jim Kelly**

- Jim reported the Goalball camp was on campus, students stayed in the Cottage and had (6) volunteers from the Malmstrom that helped. OPI audit went well, the kitchen staff used the report as guidance for next year's planning. Spring Formal dinner, April 13. Erin Faulkner creates a monthly newsletter about Cottage activities that is attached.

#### **Education: School - Julie-Dee**

- Julie-Dee reported we have 39 students. LEAP program has (3) applications for next year. She also provided information regarding referrals and potential students to the school. Our ELVS group had a Dentist come on campus along with a Vision Screening for our kids. We had PIR on Jan. 20th with Dr. Marie Alcock. We have some Observers that have been on campus TVI in Feb and will have an Interpreter observation on Mar. 10-14. Upcoming events are OPI Monitoring, Read Across America, Showdown Ski Day on Mar. 13., Flying Hooves will travel to SLC, Spring CED Apr. 4 and 5

#### **Education: Outreach - Miranda Briggs**

- Miranda shared that they have added a link for referrals for Outreach Consultants. Have 1000 students in Outreach. Updated our Maps on the web page. Working with DPHHS on training sessions, getting materials that support HP 619. Our Outreach Consultants have been hosting events across the state for our Deaf Community. Working on Family Learning Weekends, bringing in locals to be our speakers. The Campus Enrichment Days (CED), formerly VIEW and DEW, will be incorporating the Expanded Core Curriculum in a Kentucky Derby Theme.

## 51130 School for the Deaf & Blind ORG Budget Summary - No A Accruals

Data Selected for Month/FY: 01 (Jul)/2025 through 08 (Feb)/2025

This report compares ORG Budgets (ORG\_BD) to Actuals expended amounts

Business Unit	(All)
Program Year	2025
FY_BudPer	(All)
Month	(All)
Source of Auth	(All)
Fund Type	(All)
Account	(All)
Org	(All)
Acct Lvl 2	(All)
Account Type	E
Project	(All)
Ledger	(All)

[Return to Menu](#)

OBPP Program	Fund	Subclass	Acct Lvl 1	ORG Budget	Actuals Amt	Balance
<b>01 ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM</b>				<b>728,494.16</b>	<b>496,337.50</b>	<b>232,156.66</b>
	<b>01100 General Fund</b>			<b>717,429.00</b>	<b>488,666.34</b>	<b>228,762.66</b>
		<b>300H1 ADMINISTRATION</b>		<b>558,882.00</b>	<b>385,044.87</b>	<b>173,837.13</b>
			61000 Personal Services	499,706.00	332,219.86	167,486.14
			62000 Operating Expenses	59,176.00	52,825.01	6,350.99
		<b>300H5 STATE ITSD (RST)</b>		<b>158,547.00</b>	<b>103,621.47</b>	<b>54,925.53</b>
			62000 Operating Expenses	158,547.00	103,621.47	54,925.53
	<b>02050 School Trust Interest/Income</b>			<b>3,394.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>3,394.00</b>
		<b>300H1 ADMINISTRATION</b>		<b>3,394.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>3,394.00</b>
			61000 Personal Services	3,394.00	0.00	3,394.00
	<b>02259 MSDB MISC MOUS</b>			<b>7,671.16</b>	<b>7,671.16</b>	<b>0.00</b>
		<b>300A1 DIGITAL ACADEMY</b>		<b>7,671.16</b>	<b>7,671.16</b>	<b>0.00</b>
			61000 Personal Services	7,423.70	7,423.71	(0.01)
			62000 Operating Expenses	247.46	247.45	0.01
<b>02 GENERAL SERVICES</b>				<b>646,153.73</b>	<b>471,744.04</b>	<b>174,409.69</b>
	<b>01100 General Fund</b>			<b>607,407.00</b>	<b>432,997.31</b>	<b>174,409.69</b>



<u>305H1 GENERAL SERVICES</u>		607,407.00	432,997.31	174,409.69
	61000 Personal Services	349,222.00	224,589.78	124,632.22
	62000 Operating Expenses	228,734.00	206,189.53	22,544.47
	68000 Transfers-out	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00
	69000 Debt Service	28,451.00	2,218.00	26,233.00
<u>02259 MSDB MISC MOUS</u>		38,746.73	38,746.73	0.00
<u>305A2 DEQ - LEAD MITIGATION SCHOOLS</u>		38,746.73	38,746.73	0.00
	62000 Operating Expenses	38,746.73	38,746.73	0.00
<b>03 STUDENT SERVICES</b>		<b>2,126,572.00</b>	<b>1,374,450.37</b>	<b>752,121.63</b>
<u>01100 General Fund</u>		<u>2,091,843.00</u>	<u>1,362,795.42</u>	<u>729,047.58</u>
<u>310H1 STUDENT SERVICES</u>		<u>1,979,343.00</u>	<u>1,334,222.46</u>	<u>645,120.54</u>
	61000 Personal Services	1,846,103.00	1,255,783.11	590,319.89
	62000 Operating Expenses	133,240.00	78,439.35	54,800.65
<u>310H4 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OPP</u>		<u>42,500.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>42,500.00</u>
	61000 Personal Services	42,500.00	0.00	42,500.00
<u>310H6 STUDENT TRAVEL</u>		<u>45,000.00</u>	<u>21,248.18</u>	<u>23,751.82</u>
	62000 Operating Expenses	45,000.00	21,248.18	23,751.82
<u>310H7 STUDENT EXTRACURIC TRAVEL</u>		<u>25,000.00</u>	<u>7,324.78</u>	<u>17,675.22</u>
	62000 Operating Expenses	25,000.00	7,324.78	17,675.22
<u>03167 National School Lunch</u>		<u>34,729.00</u>	<u>11,654.95</u>	<u>23,074.05</u>
<u>310H1 STUDENT SERVICES</u>		<u>34,729.00</u>	<u>11,654.95</u>	<u>23,074.05</u>
	62000 Operating Expenses	34,729.00	11,654.95	23,074.05
<b>04 EDUCATION</b>		<b>6,770,097.92</b>	<b>4,060,470.09</b>	<b>2,709,627.83</b>
<u>01100 General Fund</u>		<u>6,033,580.00</u>	<u>3,819,189.18</u>	<u>2,214,390.82</u>
<u>315H1 EDUCATION</u>		<u>5,971,642.00</u>	<u>3,813,040.19</u>	<u>2,158,601.81</u>
	61000 Personal Services	5,721,509.00	3,582,109.81	2,139,399.19
	62000 Operating Expenses	250,133.00	230,930.38	19,202.62
<u>315H3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</u>		<u>35,000.00</u>	<u>6,148.99</u>	<u>28,851.01</u>
	62000 Operating Expenses	35,000.00	6,148.99	28,851.01
<u>315H4 EXTRACURIC COMP</u>		<u>26,938.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>26,938.00</u>
	61000 Personal Services	26,938.00	0.00	26,938.00
<u>02050 School Trust Interest/Income</u>		<u>302,341.00</u>	<u>59,756.29</u>	<u>242,584.71</u>

	<u>315H1 EDUCATION</u>		302,341.00	59,756.29	242,584.71
		61000 Personal Services	302,341.00	59,756.29	242,584.71
02243 Medicaid			11,534.00	0.00	11,534.00
	<u>315H1 EDUCATION</u>		11,534.00	0.00	11,534.00
		62000 Operating Expenses	11,534.00	0.00	11,534.00
03012 E.C.I.A. Chapter I			52,861.00	0.00	52,861.00
	<u>315H1 EDUCATION</u>		52,861.00	0.00	52,861.00
		61000 Personal Services	52,861.00	0.00	52,861.00
03064 EHA, Part B			119,219.00	2,336.97	116,882.03
	<u>315H1 EDUCATION</u>		119,219.00	2,336.97	116,882.03
		61000 Personal Services	49,219.00	0.00	49,219.00
		62000 Operating Expenses	70,000.00	2,336.97	67,663.03
03235 DPHHS Grant			35,750.00	14,323.16	21,426.84
	<u>315AP PRE-ETS GRANT</u>		7,250.00	3,819.62	3,430.38
		62000 Operating Expenses	7,250.00	3,819.62	3,430.38
	<u>315AS PRE-ETS</u>		28,500.00	10,503.54	17,996.46
		62000 Operating Expenses	28,500.00	10,503.54	17,996.46
03396 DPHHS Grand - Newborn Hearing			26,250.00	3,613.88	22,636.12
	<u>315AQ NEWBORN HEARING</u>		26,250.00	3,613.88	22,636.12
		61000 Personal Services	16,500.00	0.00	16,500.00
		62000 Operating Expenses	9,750.00	3,613.88	6,136.12
03590 Federal Literacy Grant			188,562.92	161,250.61	27,312.31
	<u>315AR LITERACY GRANT 9/30/24</u>		188,562.92	161,250.61	27,312.31
		61000 Personal Services	73,296.00	15,192.08	58,103.92
		62000 Operating Expenses	115,266.92	146,058.53	(30,791.61)
Grand Total			10,271,317.81	6,403,002.00	3,868,315.81



# The MSDB Student Life

February 2025  
Vol. 4, No. 5

## Message from the Director

*by Jim Kelly II*

This is our first travel weekend of the New Year – 2025! Things have slowed down a bit since the hustle and bustle during the holidays. Our students continue to be involved in many of the afterschool activities and seem to be enjoying the fun that is being offered. As always, don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions, suggestions or concerns for your child!

### STUDENT SHOWCASE

#### Student of the Quarter

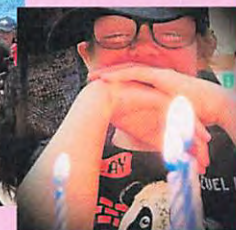
The Student Life Program is pleased to announce the second Student of the Quarter this year. This student received several nominations and was chosen unanimously by all of the Leads and Counselors.

This student has improved in listening to staff and accepting feedback and admitting their own mistakes. This student is eager to learn and is motivated to improve her skills. She is welcoming to all students. She has improved in taking responsibility for her obligations. She is an active participant in all 3 of the Student Council sub-committees and has done an excellent job as President of Student Council.

**Congratulations, Angelina!!!**



### Fun and Life in the Activity Room



Games, celebra-  
tions, birthdays,  
weekend meals,  
video games,



## New Staff Introduction

### Kylie Hall

Hello! My name is Kylie and I'm the newest staff member in the Cottages here at MSDB. Not only am I new to the school, I'm new to Montana! My husband is originally from the Great Falls area, so back in September we loaded up a moving truck and moved across the country with our two dogs, two cats, and three kids. It was quite an adventure, and one I hope I never have to repeat. I've lived in a few different places and Montana is my favorite so far!

I spend most of my free time with my kids; my oldest is 7 and I have 4 year old twins! We love to do puzzles and Lego kits, go exploring outside (when it isn't below 0), and read books together. My favorite hobby is reading, and you can always bet on there being at least one book in my bag at all times. If you ever need a book recommendation, I'm your gal.



I'm so excited to be part of the staff here! Learning ASL is new for me and being here has helped so much. Thank you to all of my new coworkers and students for being so kind, making me feel welcome, and helping me learn ASL!

## Superbowl 2025

What a nice time to share as we watch the Superbowl together this afternoon. It was very exciting to take the time and decorate the activity room in the cottages. Both the staff and the students helped organize and choose how this event would take place. The students and staff felt it was awesome to choose all of the types of food and treats that they would enjoy. Overall, it was amazing to see the energy and excitement of having this party as a team. We also thought of some games that would be fun and interactive to play together during the game.

When the game started, we were able to have a fun evening and sit on our team's side of the room. The staff and students enjoyed eating some game day food with meatballs, smokies, sandwiches, chips, cookies, and pop. We really got into the game as we watched the teams play hard together. After the game was over, we all smiled and finished our evening together in an optimistic mood. This was wonderful for us all and we are excited to share this again next year.

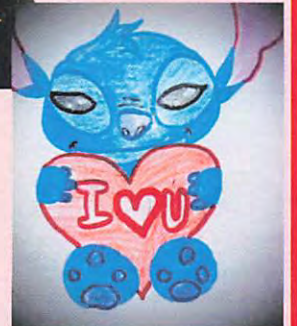
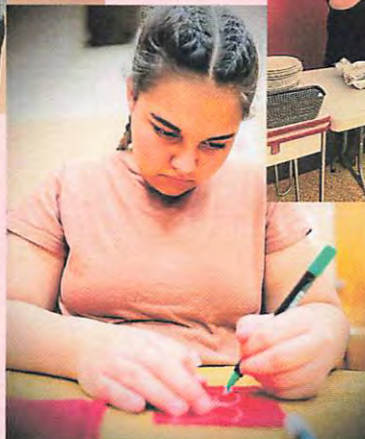




## Valentine's Fundraiser



Hi, my name is Marissa Pecoraro, and I wanted to share about our Valentine fundraiser! It was a huge success—we had 112 orders from staff, parents and students. On Tuesday, we had a great time blowing them up, and on Wednesday, the Cottage students received their gifts. Today, the teachers also got some to give to their kids, spouses, or someone special. The best part is that we didn't know who bought what for who—it kept the surprise element fun! I really enjoyed taping the candy onto the sticks and blowing them up. Overall, it was a fantastic fundraiser, and I had a blast. Thanks for taking the time to read this!







## 4-H at MSDB with Megan DeSilva

4-H helps youth learn and develop life skills. Club programs let students learn together, while project books provide individual learning. Project books are similar to a report that a student would turn-in at the end of the year to show what they learned in the project and track their activities. Here at MSDB, we work on our project books together. We set aside time 3 times a month to work on our projects. The ones we are doing for our club are Archery, Babysitting, Cats, and Animal Science. The members are truly enjoying the meetings, and it cannot be considered complete without playing a few games as a group. We love 4-H!

### 4-H Project Day



### Archery



Device for blind archers



## JOURNEY OF A LEARNER

*Our Journey of a Learner activities have been so much fun for our students and staff. Here are some of the activities and presentations that we have done in the past month.*

This month we focused on being Responsible Learners and Flexible Thinkers. We had several two-part presentations.

1. Responsibility, Accountability and Accepting Feedback: Day 1 was a presentation and small group activity explaining what each of these concepts means. Day 2 was reviewing scenarios and learning how to accept constructive feedback from parents, teachers and school staff.
2. Rights, Responsibility and Privileges: Day 1, Amy and Amanda, two of our cottage staff who are Deaf, focused on disability rights and the responsibilities that go with those rights. They also discussed the differences between Rights and Privileges as it pertains to their disabilities. The students were fully engaged in this discussion with many questions asked. Day 2, Cheyanne brought in a guest speaker. Ed Worrel of Montana Association for the Blind and OverHere Consulting in Great Falls. The students asked Ed a lot of questions and were especially interested in learning about guide dogs and service dogs. Ed invited the students to come visit him. Plans are in the works!



### JOL Poster #1: Problem Solving







## Mufasa Movie

Hi, my name is Ayvia, and I would like to explain what the movie Mufasa is about. All of us from the cottages went to AMC, and we had popcorn and drinks for both kids and adults. Additionally, the theater provided accessibility for deaf and blind/low-vision individuals, offering open captions for those who are deaf and audio descriptions for those with blindness or low vision. The movie was enjoyable and good quality!



## Boba tea in Walmart



Hi, my name is Ayvia, and I enjoy explaining Boba tea drinks. Recently, I discovered some new Boba tea drinks at Walmart, and a few of my friends wanted to try them as well. So, we decided to go there together and buy drinks. They were so delicious—it's now my favorite drink of all time!



## Student Council Committees

You may notice that our Coming Soon section is smaller than in years past. There is a good reason for that! The Activities Committee, one of 3 that we started this year, meets weekly to plan activities, some for the coming week-end and some for further out that require more time to plan. The committees each have a staff and a student chairperson, which allows for Leadership opportunities.

- Activities: Chairs—AJ and Carter
- Community Connections: Plans fundraisers and service projects. Chairs—Amanda and Marissa
- Design Team: Plans ways to update the Cottage Activity Room. Chairs—Amy and Angelina

## Weekly Student Life Activities

- EOS (Mon/Wed)
- JOL and reading (Wed-Thurs)
- 4-H (Tues)
- Goal Ball (Tues and Thurs)
- Flying Hooves—Elem. (Tues)
- Moving Mustangs (Tues 2x/mo)
- Computer Club (Tues 2x/mo)
- Flying Hooves-MS/HS (Thurs)
- Student Life Social Hour (Wed)
- Student Council (Wed)
- Snack Shack (Wed/Fri)
- Gaming Club (Fri)

## Outings/Activities

### Look what we did!

- GFHS Basketball Game (1/10)
- 4-H Project Day (1/11)
- Game Night (1/11)
- AMC Movie - Mufasa (1/12)
- Play in the Snow (1/18)
- Craft: Snowflake Art (1/19)
- Movie at the Cottage (1/20)
- Used Book Store and Library (1/25)
- Go to the Mall (1/26)
- Bunco (2/1)
- Gym Activities (2/2)

### We had too much fun! Here's more!

- Game Night (2/7)
- Decorate for SuperBowl (2/8)
- Superbowl Party (2/9)
- Valentine's Fun (2/12)

### Coming Soon

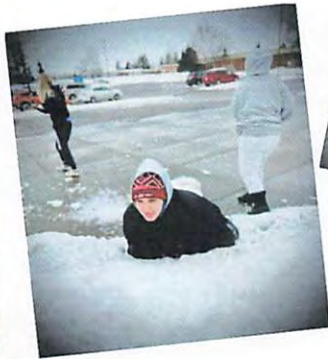
- Brush Crazy (2/22)
- Other Activities TBD
- Travel Home (2/14)
- Travel Return (2/17)



# Photography by Angelina



## Fun in the Snow



## Gym Time

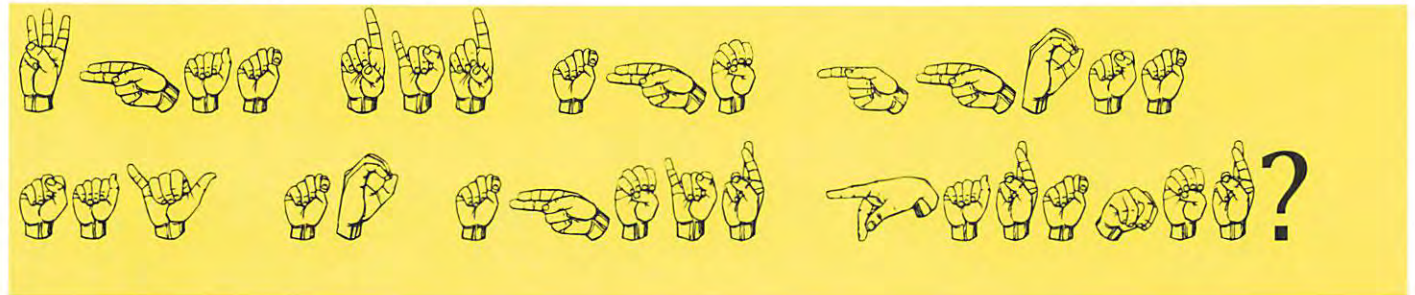
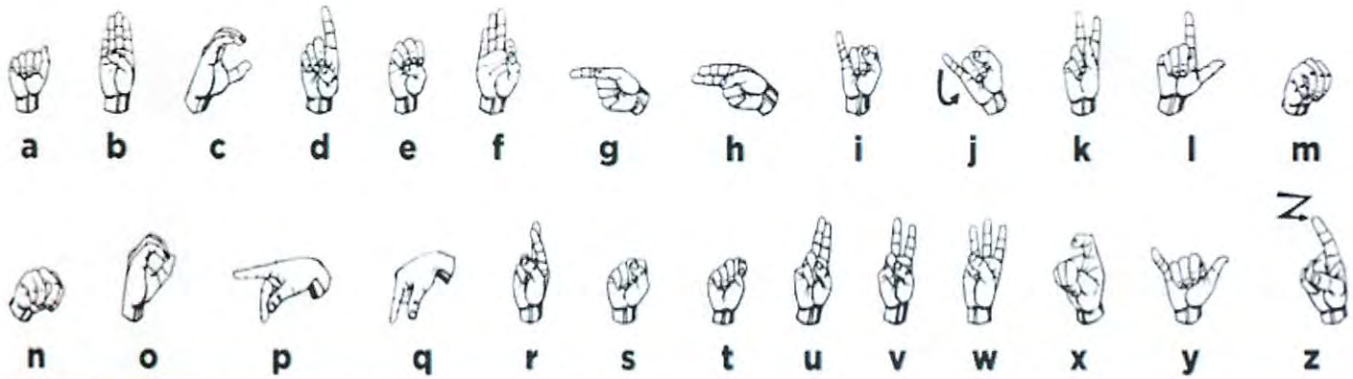




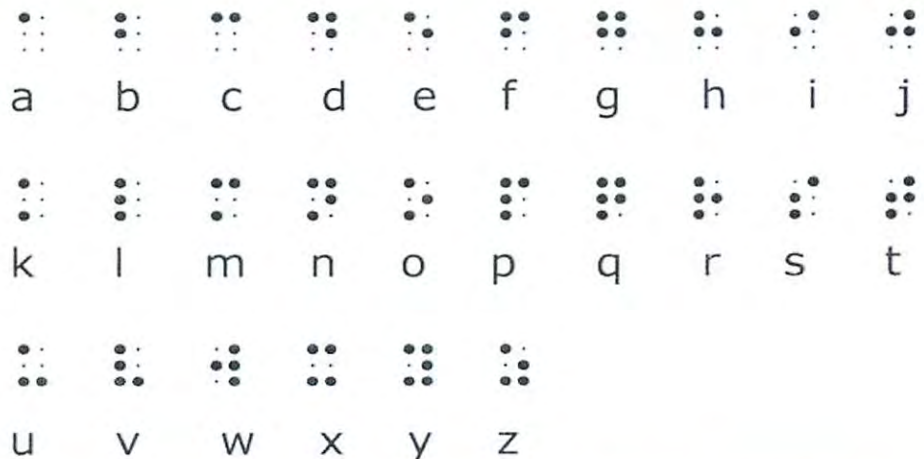
## PUZZLE PAGE

Decode the phrases using ASL Fingerspelling and Braille!

**Fingerspelling** is the process of spelling out words by using hand shapes that correspond to the letters of the word. A set of hand shapes used to spell words is known as a "manual alphabet."



**Braille** is a system that enables blind and visually impaired people to read and write through touch. It was devised by Louis Braille in 1821 and consists of raised dots arranged in "cells." A cell is made up of six dots that fit under the fingertips, arranged in two columns of three dots each.



### December Puzzler Answers:

Fingerspelling: How do snowmen shop online? Braille: They use the winter-net.

**9089 Mont Sch for  
Deaf & Blind District**

3911 Central Avenue, Great Falls, MT 59405  
Generated on 02/27/2025 02:01:43 AM Page 1 of 1

**Student Enrollment Summary Report**

Effective Date: 02/27/2025 Enrollment Types: P, S, N  
Total Race/Ethnicities: 6 of 7 Total Schools: 2  
Race/Ethnicity Source: Federal Male/Female/Total: 22/17/39

**Student Population by Race/Ethnicity and Grade Level (Male/Female/Total)**

**MT Sch For Deaf & Blind EI**

Grade	1:Hispanic/Latino	2:American Indian or Alaska Native	3:Asian	4:Black or African American	5:Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6:White	7:Two or more races	Total
02	-	-	-	-	-	2/1/3	-	2/1/3
04	-	-	-	-	-	2/3/5	-	2/3/5
05	-	-	-	-	-	1/0/1	1/1/2	2/1/3
07	-	-	1/0/1	-	-	0/2/2	-	1/2/3
08	-	-	1/0/1	-	-	-	-	1/0/1
KF	-	-	-	-	-	2/1/3	-	2/1/3
PK	-	-	-	-	-	2/1/3	-	2/1/3
PS	1/0/1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/0/1
All Grades	1/0/1	-	2/0/2	-	-	9/8/17	1/1/2	13/9/22

**MT Sch For Deaf & Blind HS**

Grade	1:Hispanic/Latino	2:American Indian or Alaska Native	3:Asian	4:Black or African American	5:Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6:White	7:Two or more races	Total
09	-	1/0/1	-	-	-	0/2/2	-	1/2/3
10	-	1/0/1	-	-	-	1/2/3	-	2/2/4
11	-	1/0/1	-	-	-	2/1/3	-	3/1/4
12	-	0/1/1	-	0/1/1	-	2/1/3	1/0/1	3/3/6
All Grades	-	3/1/4	-	0/1/1	-	5/6/11	1/0/1	9/8/17

**Student Population Excluding White not of Hispanic Origin**

School	Total	Percentage
MT Sch For Deaf & Blind EI	5	22.73%
MT Sch For Deaf & Blind HS	6	35.29%
Total	11	28.21%





# Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

3911 Central Ave; Great Falls, MT 59405

## Referral Updates

2024-25 School Year

Updated: 2/27/2025

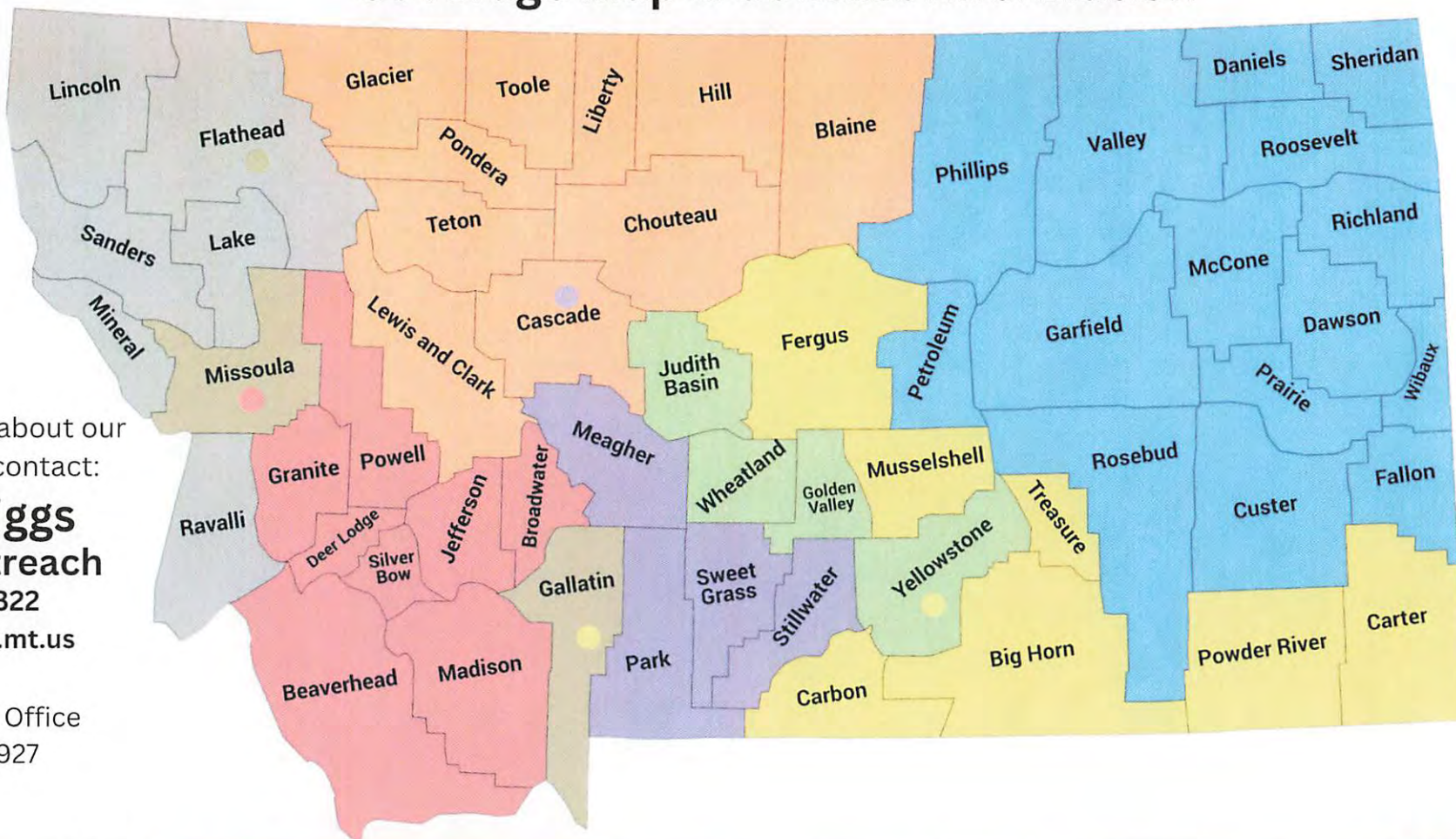
VI/DHH	Grade	Status
VI -	Preschool	No documents (Spring 2024); Outreach consultant has connected with family and Benchmark; still in process
VI -	PreK	Collecting documents (Spring 2024); <b>Moved to Ohio; Moved back to Montana (Jan 2025)</b>
VI -	2nd	Collecting documents - recently moved to GF; <b>Moved back to Helena</b>
VI -	5th	Completed 10-day Observation - Oct 2024 <b>Shared placement with GFPS</b>
VI -	5th	No documents (Spring 2024)
VI -	7th	Collecting documents (Spring 2024) - Student is at EMS - have received emails from the district asking about the referral process. <b>We were told this family has moved to Boston.</b>
VI -	10th	Collecting documents (Spring 2024) - Completed 10-day Observation - Oct 2024 Shared placement with Corvallis; <b>Having on-going conversations with Corvallis about how to reflect shared time</b>
VI -		Referral from last year; Interested in Fall 2025 placement - 6yr old - updating paperwork (1.31.2025) Looking at file review team.
VI -	5th	Moved from Arizona; Working with West Elementary; (2/4/2025) Have received documents. Looking at file review team.
DHH/VI -	1st	Beginning the Process - 9/26; File review 10/23/2024; Gathering additional info/scheduling 10-day observation (family hoping for a few days a month); Day 1 of 10-day is 11/15 in conjunction with CED; Future dates TBD; Nov. 20-21; Jan. 8-9; Jan. 13-14. Post Obs Mtg held Feb 7th. Now waiting for ER to be completed by his team.
DHH/VI -	11th	9/5/2024 - Browning - No documents

DHH -	Preschool	Beginning the process - collecting docs; File Review completed; 10-day Observation in progress 10/21/2024; Post Observation Mtg held & <b>recommended placement 11/8/2024</b>
DHH -	PreK	Ready for 10-day observation (Spring 2024) - Talked with Mom, ready for observation, beginning process to get CIs - Identifying dates for a 10-day - 10-day starts 9/23/2024 - <b>Family has asked to suspend the process for now; Mom has mentioned that she is interested in revisiting the 10 day-observation for a possible dual placement in the fall</b>
DHH -	2nd	9/4/2024 - GF- No Documents
DHH -	4th	Recently moved back to Montana - beginning the process (former student) - File review completed - 10-day Obs beginning Sept. 2nd - <b>Post observation meeting 9/19/2024 - Placed MSDB</b>
DHH -	4th	Recently moved to GF - beginning the process - File review completed - 10-day Obs beginning Sept. 2nd - <b>Post observation meeting 9/19/2024 - Placed MSDB</b>
DHH -	9th	Beginning the process Trying to schedule a family meeting. No recent updates
DHH -	10th	Collecting documents (Spring 2024) - <b>Has decided to stay at CMR at this time Aug. 2024</b>





# MSDB Deaf/Hard of Hearing Outreach Consultant Coverage Map & Contact Information



or more information about our  
Outreach programs contact:

**Miranda Briggs**  
**Director of Outreach**

Cell: 406-403-1322

mbriggs@msdb.k12.mt.us

Campus Outreach Office

VP: 406-282-1927



**Alice  
Anderson**

Cell: 406-468-4818

VP: 406-203-4094

aanderson@msdb.k12.mt.us



**Amber  
Bateen**

Cell: 406-468-4819

VP: 406-564-1531

abateen@msdb.k12.mt.us



**Leann  
Goss**

Cell: 406-590-0461

VP: 406-564-1529

lgoss@msdb.k12.mt.us



**Emily  
LaSalle**

Cell: 406-461-1294

VP: 406-205-1815

elasalle@msdb.k12.mt.us



**Tailore  
Moore**

Cell: 406-788-3806

tmoore@msdb.k12.mt.us



**Katie  
James**

Cell: 406-781-3906

VP: 406-205-1149

kjames@msdb.k12.mt.us



**Lace  
Lesofski**

Cell: 406-880-0622

llesofski@msdb.k12.mt.us



**Amy  
Tangen**

Cell: 406-868-0851

atangen@msdb.k12.mt.us

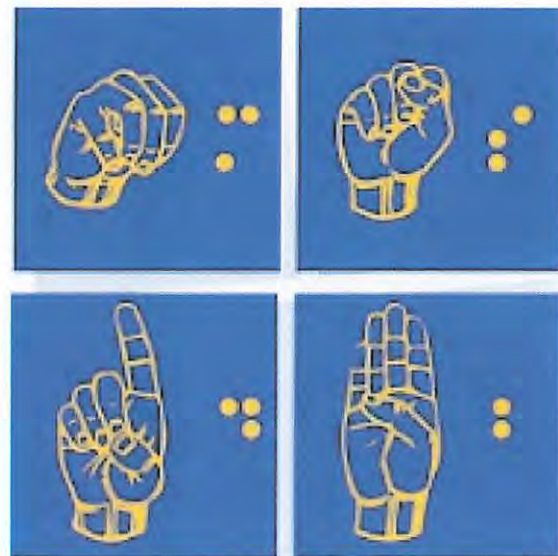


## Services Offered:

- Offer suggestions, recommendations and consultation to classroom teachers and specialists
- Assign Family Advisors and Deaf Mentors
- Provide home based consultative services
- Collaborate with other service providers to develop Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs)
- Suggest or lend specialized instructional materials
- Provide assessment options and input
- Participate in education meetings (Reevaluations, Reevaluation meetings, IEP, 504, etc.)
- Be available as an ongoing resource and support contact via phone and/or email
- Serve as a resource for medical, educational, and community programs
- Work closely with Part C providers, Early Childhood Centers, Speech Language Pathologists, and other related service providers
- Work closely with area audiologists to provide information regarding current and appropriate technology
- Work with MSDB campus to facilitate appropriate referrals of students for visits, evaluation, and/or placement at MSDB
- Provide in-service and trainings to schools, daycare centers, and other interested parties
- Plan Family Learning Weekends (FLW) and Campus Enrichment Days (CED), then provide related information to families
- Arrange educational trainings and workshop opportunities
- Care about your Deaf/ Hard-of-hearing child!!



## Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

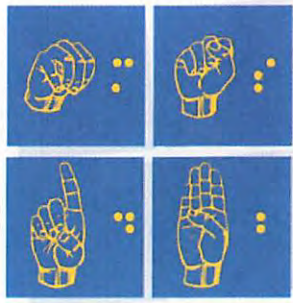


**Lifting Students  
Beyond Expectations**

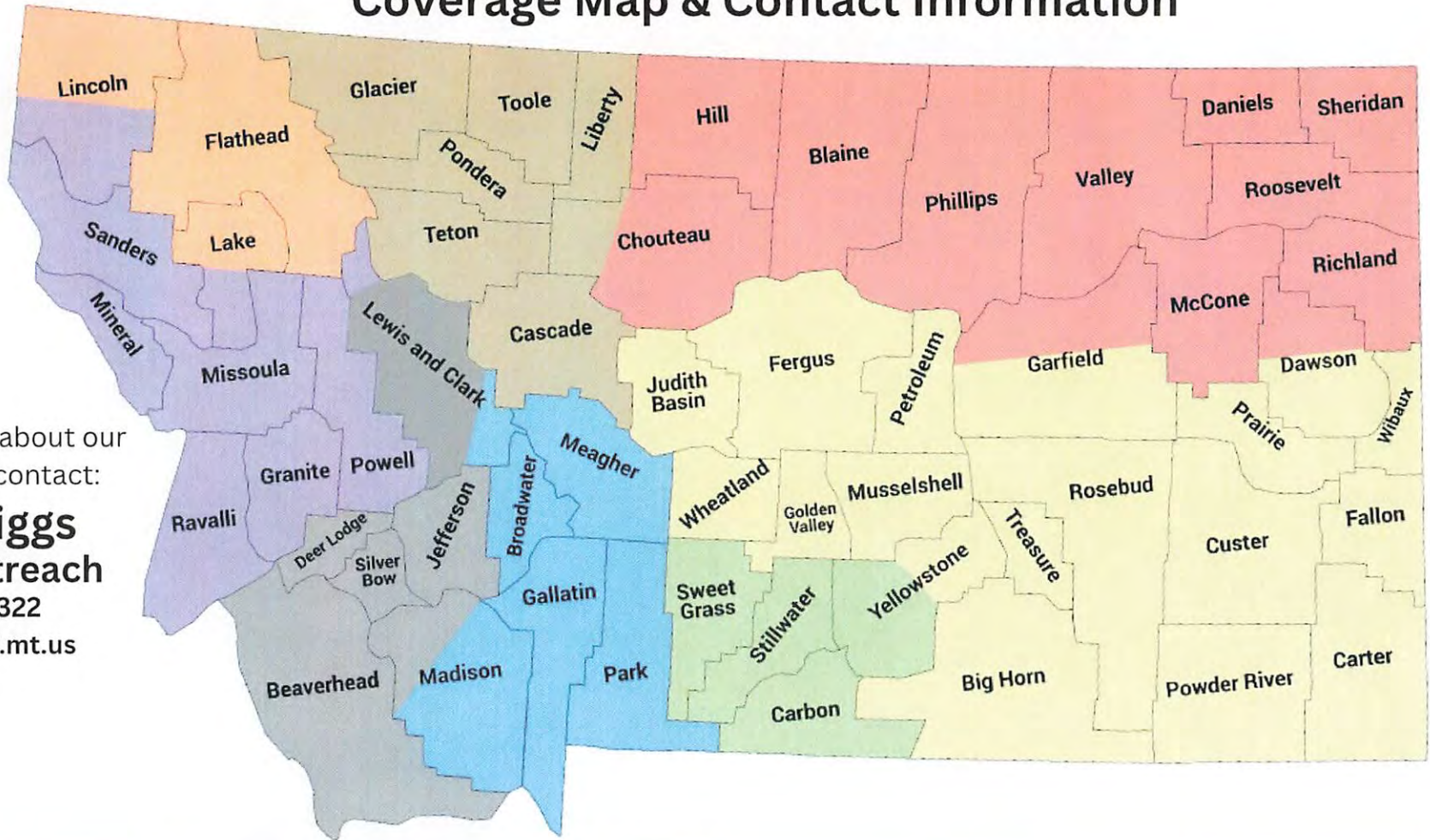
## Deaf & Hard of Hearing Outreach Services

**3911 Central Ave  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
Fax: 406-771-6164  
[www.msdbmustangs.org](http://www.msdbmustangs.org)**





# MSDB Visually Impaired Outreach Consultant Coverage Map & Contact Information



or more information about our  
Outreach programs contact:

**Miranda Briggs**  
Director of Outreach  
Cell: 406-403-1322  
mbriggs@msdb.k12.mt.us

**Heather Hill**



Cell: 406-403-1004  
hhill@msdb.k12.mt.us

**Michelle Cross**



Cell: 406-788-3452  
mcross@msdb.k12.mt.us

**Shawn Erickson**



Cell: 406-471-0225  
serickson@msdb.k12.mt.us

**Susan Davis**



Cell: 406-670-3569  
sdavis@msdb.k12.mt.us

**Barb Peterson**



Cell: 406-544-7537  
bpeterson@msdb.k12.mt.us

**Jenn Norlander**



Cell: 406-468-4820  
jnorlander@msdb.k12.mt.us

**Kerri Norick**



Cell: 406-599-3176  
knorick@msdb.k12.mt.us

**Kacie Wilmot**



Cell: 406-629-0111  
kwilmot@msdb.k12.mt.us

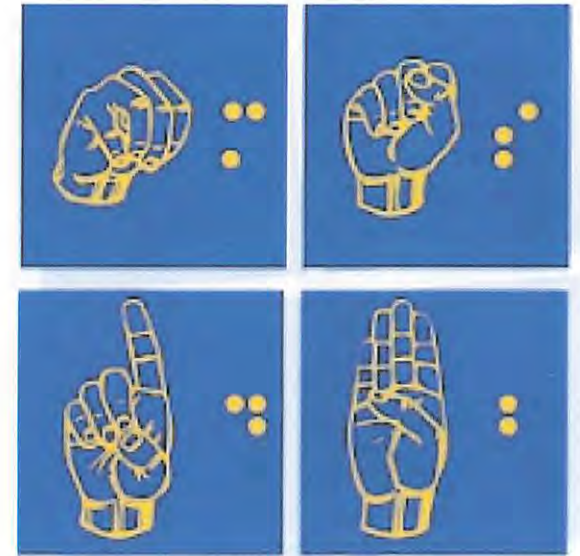


## Services Offered:

- Serve as a resource for medical, early childhood centers & Eye Care Specialists
  - Help parents understand vision reports from Ophthalmologists or Optometrist
  - Help families establish home-based early education services through the Family Advisor program
  - Collaborate with other service providers to develop Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs)
  - Provide home based consultative services
  - Provide trainings and technical assistance to promote appropriate intervention strategies and educational practices as part of an education team
  - Offer suggestions, recommendations and consultations to classroom teacher and specialists
  - Participate in education meetings (Reevaluations, Reevaluation meetings, IEP, 504, etc.)
  - Suggest or provide specialized instruction materials
  - Be available as an ongoing resource and support contact via phone and/or email
- Perform Functional Vision Assessments, Learning Media Assessments and assess Braille Literacy
  - Work with MSDB campus to facilitate appropriate referrals of students for visits, evaluation, and/or placement at MSDB
  - Provide in-service and trainings to schools, daycare centers, and other agencies serving blind/visually impaired children
  - Plan Family Learning Weekends (FLW) and Campus Enrichment Days (CED), then provide related information to families
  - Braille instruction training, Untangling the Dots, mentoring and support to local school district teams
  - Care about your blind/visually impaired child!!



## Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind



**Lifting Students  
Beyond Expectations**

## Blind & Visually Impaired Outreach Services

**3911 Central Ave  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
Fax: 406-771-6164  
[www.msdbmustangs.org](http://www.msdbmustangs.org)**

❖ **LICENSURE COMMITTEE – (Items 18-20)**

**Dr. Ron Slinger**

**ITEM 18**

**ACTION ON REGENERATED TEST  
REVIEW AND QUALIFYING SCORE FOR  
SOCIAL STUDIES, TECHNICAL EDUCATION,  
AND FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE**

**Crystal Andrews**

# Montana Board of Public Education

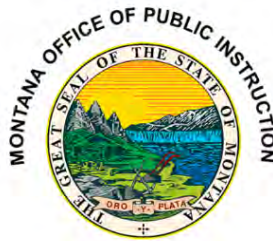
## Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	ETS Praxis Fall Test Review(s) Panel Review and Recommendations
<b>Presenter</b>	Crystal Andrews
<b>Position Title</b>	Accreditation and Licensure Senior Manager Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	The current Social Studies Test #5081, Family and Consumer Science Test #5122, and Technology Education Test #5051 will be retiring in August 2025. The regenerated test(s) will need a qualifying score set for the state of Montana. This is a request for action from the board after hearing the recommendations from the Praxis Working Committee and Montana Council of Deans of Education.
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Action Item- To recommend approval of the regenerated tests and qualifying scores for three Praxis exams.
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	To recommend approval of the regenerated test #5581 Social Studies and the qualifying score of 153. To recommend approval of the regenerated test #5123 Consumer Science and the qualifying score of 153. To recommend approval of the regenerated test #5053 Technology Education and the qualifying score of 153.







## ETS Praxis Fall Test Review(s) Panel Review and Recommendations Action Item

### Social Studies Test Review

- Social Studies: Content Knowledge #5081 replaced with #5581 Social Studies
- Panel met virtually October 8, 2024, 2-3:20pm
- Panel of 4 teachers and 4 EPP faculty, (plus 3 PWC members/observers)
- Regenerated test with current test sunsetting in August 2025

### What has Changed?

What has Changed?			
Previous 5081		Redesigned 5581	
Content Categories	Approximate Percentage of Examination	Content Categories	Approximate Percentage of Examination
I. United States History	20%	I. United States History	29 %
II. World History	20%	II. World History	22 %
III. Geography	20%	III. Geography	13 %
IV. Civics	15%	IV. Civics	23 %
V. Economics	15%	V. Economics	13 %
VI. Behavioral Science	10%		

**Timing**

- Timing has increased from 120 minutes to 150 minutes

**Number of Test Questions**

- Number of questions increased from 120 to 140

### Data Review

#### Technical Report – Social Studies (5581)

##### Participating States

Panelists from 11<sup>1</sup> states, and Washington, D.C., were recommended by their respective education agencies. The education agencies recommended panelists with (a) experience as social studies teachers or college faculty who prepare social studies teachers and (b) familiarity with the knowledge and skills required of beginning social studies teachers.

##### Recommended Passing Score

ETS provides a recommended passing score from the multistate standard-setting study to help education agencies determine an appropriate operational passing score. For the *Praxis Social Studies* test, the recommended passing score is 74 out of a possible 120 raw-score points. The scale score associated with a raw score of 74 is 153 on a 100–200 scale.

#### Adopting Passing Scores – Social Studies (5581)

State/Province	Qualifying Score
Pennsylvania	153
South Dakota	153
Virginia	153
West Virginia	153
Wyoming	153

9 of the 10 states using Praxis 5581 adopted a passing score of 153

Four of the states surrounding Montana adopted a passing score of 153

Cut scores range from 141 to 153

### Panel General Feedback

- Discussion of the vast amount of content and time periods with a Broadfield test; need for more document-based questions, concerns about the geography section and geographic skills but overall, okay with the test

### Panel Recommendation



- First vote: 8 said 153 and 1 said 160
  - Discussion – wanted the rigor but realities of teacher retention and recruitment if we go higher than surrounding states, transferability
- Second vote: 7 said 153 and 1 said 160
- Final recommendation is 153 (7-1 vote)

#### PWC and MCDE Recommendation(s)

- Both voted unanimously for the cut score of 153.

#### Family Consumer Science Test Review

- Family and Consumer Sciences #5122 replaced with #5123 (same name)
- Panel met virtually October 8, 2024, 2-4:05pm
- Panel of 3 teachers, 1 EPP faculty, 1 OPI content specialist
- Regenerated test with current test sunsetting in August 2025

#### What has Changed?

What has Changed?			
Previous 5122		Redesigned 5123	
Content Categories	Approximate Percentage of Examination	Content Categories	Approximate Percentage of Examination
I. Food and Nutrition	22%	I. Family, Career, and Community Interrelationships	17%
II. Housing and Interior Design	12%	II. Wellness, Nutrition, and Food Science	21%
III. Textiles, Fashion, and Apparel	12%	III. Human Development and Interpersonal Relationships	18%
IV. Human Development and Interpersonal Relationships	20%	IV. Housing, Interior Design, Textiles, and Apparel	12%
V. Foundations of Family and Consumer Sciences Education	16%	V. Business Skills Across Career Pathways	12%
VI. Resource Management	20%	VI. Professional Teaching Practices	20%

**Timing**

- Timing has increased from 120 minutes to 130 minutes (2 hours 10 minutes)

**Number of Test Questions**

- Increased from 120 to 130 multiple choice questions

#### Data Review

##### Technical Report – Family & Consumer Sciences (5123)

<p><b>Participating States</b></p> <p>Panelists from 10 states were recommended by their respective education agencies. The education agencies recommended panelists with (a) experience as family and consumer sciences teachers or college faculty who prepare family and consumer sciences teachers and (b) familiarity with the knowledge and skills required of beginning family and consumer sciences teachers.</p> <p><b>Recommended Passing Score</b></p> <p>ETS provides a recommended passing score from the multistate standard-setting study to help education agencies determine an appropriate operational passing score. For the <i>Praxis</i> Family and Consumer Sciences test, the recommended passing score is 66 out of a possible 110 raw-score points. The scale score associated with a raw score of 66 is 151 on a 100–200 scale.</p>
---

##### Adopting Passing Scores – Family & Consumer Sciences (5123)

State/Province	Qualifying Score
Arkansas	138
Idaho	151
Indiana	151
Kansas	151
North Dakota	153
Pennsylvania	151
South Dakota	151
Tennessee	151
West Virginia	151
Wyoming	151

9 of the 11 states using Praxis 5123 adopted a passing score of 151

Three of the states surrounding Montana adopted a passing score of 151

Cut scores range from 138 to 153

#### Panel General Feedback

- Discussion of difficulties with such a broad field/discipline, questions regarding career pathways, financial questions, customer vs client, but overall, okay with test

#### Panel Recommendation

- First vote: 151=2, 144=1, 158=2
- Significant Discussion – wanted the rigor but realities of teacher retention and recruitment if we go higher than surrounding states, struggling with deciding what to do; not comfortable going as high as 158, concerns about no data

- Second vote: 153 (5-0) with a request to review the results in two years (25-26, 26-27 so summer/early fall 2027)

### PWC and MCDE Recommendation(s)

- Both voted unanimously for the cut score of 153 with a review of test completer data in Fall 2027.

### Technology Education Test Review

- Technology Education #5051 replaced with #5053 Technology and Engineering Education
- Panel met virtually October 8, 2024, 2-2:50pm
- Panel of 1 EPP faculty and 1 OPI content specialist
- Regenerated test with current test sunsetting in August 2025

### What has Changed?



Previous 5051		Redesigned 5053	
Content Categories	Approximate Percentage of Examination	Content Categories	Approximate Percentage of Examination
I. Technology and Society	15%	I. Fundamentals of Technology and Engineering	25%
II. Technological Design and Problem-Solving	20%	II. Design and Application of Products and Systems	21%
III. Energy, Power, and Transportation	15%	III. Technology Contexts 1: Energy, Materials, and the Built Environment	16%
IV. Information and Communication Technologies	15%	IV. Technology Context 2: Information, Computation, and Technological Applications	16%
V. Manufacturing and Construction Technologies	15%	V. Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities	22%
VI. Pedagogical and Professional Studies	20%		

#### Timing

- Timing remains the same at 120 minutes

#### Number of Test Questions

- Number of questions remains the same at 120

### Data Review

#### Technical Report – Technology & Engineering Education (5053)



##### Participating States

Panelists from 10 states, were recommended by their respective education agencies. The education agencies recommended panelists with (a) experience as technology and engineering teachers or college faculty who prepare technology and engineering teachers and (b) familiarity with the knowledge and skills required of beginning technology and engineering teachers.

##### Recommended Passing Score

ETS provides a recommended passing score from the multistate standard-setting study to help education agencies determine an appropriate operational passing score. For the *Praxis* Technology and Engineering Education test, the recommended passing score is 65 out of a possible 100 raw-score points. The scale score associated with a raw score of 65 is 157 on a 100–200 scale.

#### Adopting Passing Scores – Technology & Engineering Education (5053)



8 of the 10 states using Praxis 5053 adopted a passing score of 157		Cut scores range from 144 to 157	
State/Province	Score	State/Province	Qualifying Score
Arkansas	144	Oklahoma	157
Idaho	157	Pennsylvania	157
Indiana	157	South Dakota	157
Kansas	157	West Virginia	157
North Dakota	153	Wyoming	157

Three of the states surrounding Montana adopted a passing score of 157

### Panel General Feedback

- Overall positive feedback with concerns over only a handful of questions

### Panel Recommendation

- First vote: split between 157 and 151
- Discussion of leaning toward lower because of the diversity of the field in Montana, recruitment in this high-need field, and looking at surrounding states
- Second vote: 153 (2-0)

### PWC and MCDE Recommendation(s)

- Both voted unanimously for the cut score of 153.

---

## Montana Council of Deans of Education



Carroll College • Montana State University Northern  
Montana State University Billings • Montana State University  
Rocky Mountain College • Salish Kootenai College  
Stone Child College • University of Montana  
University of Montana Western  
University of Providence

### MEMORANDUM

---

**TO:** OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
CRYSTAL ANDREWS, ACCREDITATION AND LICENSURE SENIOR MANAGER

**FROM:** MONTANA COUNCIL OF DEANS OF EDUCATION (MCDE)  
DR. TRICIA SEIFERT, CO-CHAIR  
DR. JOE HELBLING, CO-CHAIR

**SUBJECT:** TEST REVIEW — PRAXIS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES BROADFIELD, FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 10, 2025

On October 8, 2024, three panels met to review Praxis tests for the following endorsement areas:

- Social Studies Broadfield
- Faculty & Consumer Sciences
- Technology Education Broadfield

This memo details the discussion of the Praxis Working Committee following the panels' efforts and the recommendation coming from the Montana Council of Deans of Education.

**Social Studies.** The Social Studies Praxis test of content knowledge (#5081) has been replaced with test #5581. The distribution of items across content areas has changed with a greater percentage of items focusing on American History and Civics than in the previous version; the number of questions has increased by 20 items and the time to complete has also increased by 30 minutes. The PWC discussed and voted unanimously to recommend a cut score at 153. The MCDE voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the PWC at its meeting on Nov 19, 2024.

*Recommendation: The MCDE unanimously recommends the cut score of 153 for the Praxis test #5581 Social Studies.*

**Family & Consumer Science.** The Family & Consumer Sciences Praxis test of content knowledge (#5122) has been replaced with test #5123. The distribution of items across content areas has changed modestly; the number of questions has increased by 10 items and the time to complete has also increased by 10 minutes. The panel of reviewers felt the test was appropriate. The PWC discussion centered primarily on identifying the cut score in light of teacher recruitment and retention in this area. The PWC voted unanimously to recommend a cut score at 153 and requested to review the results of test completers in Fall 2027. The MCDE voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the PWC at its meeting on Nov 19, 2024.

*Recommendation: The MCDE unanimously recommends the cut score of 153 for the Family & Consumer Sciences Praxis test #5123 and a review of test completer data in Fall 2027.*

**Technology Education.** The Technology Education Praxis test of content knowledge (#5051) has been replaced and renamed with the Technology & Engineering Education test #5053. The distribution of items across content areas has changed to reflect the fundamentals of engineering; the number of questions nor the time to complete has changed. The panel of reviewers felt the test was appropriate with generally positive feedback. The PWC discussion centered primarily on identifying the cut score in light of the diversity of the field in Montana, recruitment in this high-need field, and looking at surrounding states. The PWC voted unanimously to recommend a cut score at 153. The MCDE voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the PWC at its meeting on Nov 19, 2024.

*Recommendation: The MCDE unanimously recommends the cut score of 153 for the Technology & Engineering Education test #5053.*



**ITEM 19**

**ACTION ON MONTANA STATE  
UNIVERSITY SPECIAL EDUCATION  
CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

**Crystal Andrews**

# Montana Board of Public Education

## Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	Recommend Initial Approval of Montana State University's Request to Implement: Special Education Certificate.
<b>Presenter</b>	Crystal Andrews
<b>Position Title</b>	Accreditation and Licensure Senior Manager Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	<p>The State Superintendent recommends initial approval of Montana State University's request to implement a Special Education Certificate.</p> <p>Program guidelines and timeline are included in the BPE Agenda Packet.</p>
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Action Item
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	10.58.802 Approval of New Curricular Programs
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	Approve Montana State University's request to implement a Special Education Certificate.





## **APPROVAL OF NEW CURRICULAR PROGRAMS** **APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

### **Montana State University- Special Education Certificate** Administrative Rules of Montana 10.58.802

Step 1: Initial Approval	Date Submitted
Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) curriculum process and procedures.	Summer 2024
Institutional body implements policy to add new programs.	Summer 2024
Institutional governing body, i.e., board of directors, institutional leadership, or Board of Regents, as applicable, approves new program application.	September 2024
Verification of regional accreditation.	September 2024

Step 2: Application Process	Date Submitted
EPP completes the Institutional Self-Study Report (ISSR) to address Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM)10.58.802 Approval of New Curricular Programs.	September 2024
EPP completes sections of the ISSR unit standards addressing how the new curricular program is aligned with ARM 10.58.311 – 315	September 2024
EPP completes sections of the ISSR: ARM 10.58.501 Teaching Standards for endorsement subject areas; and specific sections of ARM related to the new program.	September 2024
EPP provides support material and resources as needed to respond to the Specific ISSR Sections – use electronic links as applicable, e.g., online Web links containing additional resources and support material, catalogs, programs of studies, assessment system information, surveys of need.	September 2024

Step 3: Application Submission	Date Submitted
EPP submits completed ISSR electronically to the OPI.	October 2, 2024

Step 4: Office Audit/Review	Date Submitted
OPI conducts the audit/review of the application materials.	November 2024

OPI provides an electronic report to EPP with comments and specific requests for additional documentation.	December 2024
EPP submits a follow-up report/response to OPI, as necessary.	December 2024

Step 5: Site Visit	Date Submitted
If the EPP is scheduled for a regular site review, the new program is included in the regular review.	N/A
If the EPP is not scheduled for a regular review within the next two years, the OPI will conduct a site review to verify the ISSR of the new curricular program meets the PEPP Standards.	Fall 2026
OPI facilitates the site review to verify the ISSR meets the PEPP Standards of the new program.	Fall 2026
Site Visits follow the approved state protocol based on the PEPP Standards.	Fall 2026

Step 6: Final Approval Process	Date Submitted
Site visitor team submits the state exist report to the state superintendent.	January 2027
State Superintendent of Public Instruction makes recommendation to approve/disapprove the proposed new curricular program to the BPE based upon the site team report.	March 2027
BPE takes final action on the Superintendent's recommendation.	May 2027



**ITEM 20**

**REVIEW DRAFT COUNCIL FOR THE  
ACCREDITATION OF EDUCATOR  
PREPARATION MEMORANDUM OF  
UNDERSTANDING**

**Crystal Andrews**

# Montana Board of Public Education

## Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Agreement
<b>Presenter</b>	Crystal Andrews
<b>Position Title</b>	Accreditation and Licensure Senior Manager Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	<p>The Partnership Agreement is between three parties: the Montana Board of Public Education, the Montana State Superintendent of Public Education, and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).</p> <p>CAEP is a nongovernment, voluntary association that is a nationally recognized accreditor by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Through an Accreditation Council, CAEP accredits Educator Preparation Programs EPP).</p> <p>The purpose of this partnership agreement is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outline preferences about program review options,</li><li>• Review team compositions for accreditation site review conducted by CAEP of the Montana EPPs, and</li><li>• Establish the responsibilities that each party has in supporting CAEP Accreditation activities for EPPs voluntarily requesting joint reviews.</li></ul> <p>This partnership agreement is for MT EPPs that elect to have a joint accreditation for the State and CAEP. The agreement is for 1 year, from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.</p>
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Information only
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	None
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	None



**Montana Board of Public Education,  
the Montana State Superintendent of Public Education  
and  
The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)  
Partnership Agreement**

Whereas, CAEP is a nongovernmental, voluntary membership organization committed to the effective preparation of teachers and other P-12 professional educators; and

Whereas, CAEP, through an autonomous Accreditation Council, accredits educator preparation providers (EPP's) and advances excellent educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student learning; and

Whereas, CAEP is a nationally recognized accreditor, having earned recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and is seeking recognition by the United States Secretary of Education, and, therefore, develops policy and procedures aligned with all applicable requirements of CHEA and, to the extent practicable, the U.S. Department of Education; and

Whereas, the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE), herein referred to as the State, supports continuous improvement in educator preparation.

CAEP, and the State hereby enter into this agreement detailing the State's preferences with regard to program review options and review team composition for accreditation Site Reviews conducted by CAEP of EPP's operating within the State and establishing the primary responsibilities each party has in supporting CAEP's accreditation activities involving all such EPP's.

## **1. CAEP Standards and Scope of Accreditation**

The Parties understand and agree that:

The CAEP Board of Directors (CAEP Board or Board) has adopted standards (CAEP Standards or Standards) that serve as the basis for all accreditation reviews undertaken by CAEP.

- 1.1. As a result of the ongoing critical self-review that CAEP undertakes to maintain and improve the quality of CAEP accreditation, the CAEP Board will undertake a comprehensive review and revision of the CAEP Standards on a schedule set by the Board and may, as needed, make interim amendments to the Standards. In making any such changes, CAEP will seek stakeholder and public input, including input from the State and its EPP's.
- 1.2. It is the responsibility of the State and any EPP's seeking or continuing CAEP accreditation to stay informed of any changes made to the CAEP Standards and the timeline(s) set by the Board for the implementation of or transition to new or revised Standards.
- 1.3. The CAEP scope of accreditation, defined in policy, distinguishes between two levels of educator preparation:

1.3.1.1. Initial-Licensure Preparation is provided through programs at the baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate levels leading to initial-licensure, certification, or endorsement that are designed to develop P-12 teachers. All Initial-Licensure Preparation programs within the Scope of Accreditation will be reviewed under CAEP Standards for Initial-Licensure.

1.3.1.2. Advanced-Level Preparation is provided through programs at the post-baccalaureate or graduate level leading to licensure, certification, or endorsement. Advanced-Level Programs are designed to develop P-12 teachers who have already completed an initial-licensure program, currently licensed administrators, other certificated (or similar state language) school professionals for employment in P-12 schools/districts. All Advanced-Level programs within the Scope of Accreditation will be reviewed under CAEP Standards for Advanced-Level Preparation.

## **2. CAEP's Responsibility for Education Preparation Provider (EPP) Accreditation**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 2.1. CAEP, through the Accreditation Council, has sole responsibility for granting CAEP accreditation to an EPP, and for supporting and overseeing NCATE- and TEAC- accredited EPP's through continuous accreditation and the CAEP eligibility processes described in CAEP policy.
- 2.2. The process required for accreditation by CAEP is outlined in policies and procedures. Policies and procedures may be revised from time to time. It is the responsibility of the State and any EPP seeking CAEP accreditation to stay informed of any such changes as they may impact the CAEP accreditation process from the time of their adoption or publication.

## **3. State's Responsibility for Program Approval**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 3.1. The State has responsibility for program approval. In granting program approval, the State will utilize information generated from CAEP's review(s) of an EPP, including but not limited to an Accreditation Council decision on CAEP accreditation and the assignment of any Areas for Improvement (AFIs) and Stipulations, as described in CAEP policy. Although the State may elect to have state-specific standards and/or requirements incorporated into the CAEP review, consistent with the program review options outlined below, only information gathered on an EPP's compliance with CAEP Standards and requirements will be used by the Accreditation Council to make a decision.
- 3.2. The State will periodically review its program review requirements against the CAEP Standards and policies and will, in a timely manner, make CAEP aware of any conflicts or potential inconsistencies so that all parties to this agreement are aware of any such issues and can work constructively together to minimize any challenges that may arise from them.



#### 4. CAEP Accreditation Cycle

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 4.1. The CAEP accreditation cycle involves an EPP in continuous improvement and requires an EPP to demonstrate that it meets CAEP's high standards of quality required to improve P-12 student learning.
- 4.2. To merit full accreditation by CAEP, an EPP must meet all CAEP Standards on the basis of sufficient and accurate evidence.
- 4.3. A Site Review, carried out by an Evaluation Team, is an essential part of the accreditation process. Members of the assigned team investigate the quality of an EPP's evidence, including the accuracy and consistency of the evidence provided in relation to CAEP Standards. In accordance with CAEP policy, CAEP may utilize a virtual site review or may have one or more Evaluation Team members participating using electronic means.
- 4.4. The State elects that CAEP's reviews of EPPs in the State will be carried out using Evaluation Teams composed as follows:
  - 4.4.1. **Joint Review Team.** For any review except one required in conjunction with an accreditation decision of Accreditation with Stipulations or Probationary Accreditation, the composition of the Evaluation Team will be as follows:
    - 4.4.1.1. For a Review involving only one level of accreditation (i.e., initial or advanced), the Joint Review Team includes four national reviewers appointed by CAEP and up to three reviewers appointed by the State.
    - 4.4.1.2. For a Review involving both levels of accreditation, initial and advanced-level, the Evaluation Team will include five CAEP-appointed reviewers and up to four state-appointed reviewers.
    - 4.4.1.3. For a Stipulation or Probation review, the Evaluation Team is comprised of two CAEP-appointed reviewers. The state may choose to add one reviewer for a total of a three-person team. The lead reviewer is appointed by CAEP.
  - 4.4.1.4. The State shall provide CAEP with its recommended Evaluation Team members within any timelines established by CAEP. If the State is unable to appoint members, CAEP will appoint from its pool of volunteers trained to serve as Evaluation Team members a CAEP-only team. All such teams are led by an Evaluation Team chair (or Evaluation Team leader) appointed by CAEP.
- 4.5. Prior to assignment to any CAEP Evaluation Team, an individual must have successfully completed CAEP training for review team members and must acknowledge understanding of, and agreement to, adhere to CAEP's code of conduct, including with regard to confidentiality and conflicts of interest.
- 4.6. Each Evaluation Team shall include a P-12 practitioner, when possible. The State will make recommendations for P-12 practitioners through the CAEP accreditation platform.

- 4.7. At the discretion of the State, the State's teachers' association(s) may appoint one (1) representative per association to observe the Site Review. Any expenses associated with the attendance of an observer must be covered by the association(s) or State. Prior to participation, any observer must acknowledge understanding of an agreement to adhere to CAEP's policies and procedures regarding Site Reviews and the CAEP code of conduct, including with regard to confidentiality and conflicts of interest.
- 4.8. All Site Review activities undertaken by a CAEP Evaluation Team will be conducted in accordance with CAEP policies and procedures.
- 4.9. CAEP is not responsible for Site Review expenses for state-assigned personnel.
- 4.10. An EPP that is subject to the jurisdiction of the State may choose from among any of the following program review options for CAEP accreditation:
- 4.10.1. **Specialty Program Review with National Recognition.** The goal of the specialized professional association (SPA) Program Review with National Recognition is to align specialty licensure area data with national standards developed by SPAs in order to receive national recognition at the program level. The Evaluation Team will consider evidence that the EPP presents as gathered from the National Recognition decision-making process and made available in SPA program level reports to meet the sufficiency criteria related to CAEP Standard R1, Component R1.2 (Initial) and/or Standard RA.1, Component RA1.2 (Advanced).
- 4.10.2. **State Review by State Authority.** The State conducts program reviews for purposes of State approval and to inform CAEP accreditation. An EPP undergoing the State Review option will follow State guidelines. The State provides forms and instructions on how to meet all State standards for licensure/certificate program approval. Upon an EPP's completion of the State authority forms, trained reviewers are selected and assigned within appropriate content areas. Reviewers make recommendations for further action and/or approval. The State makes the final decision on the approval of any program. The CAEP Evaluation Team will consider evidence that the EPP presents as gathered from the State Review process to meet the sufficiency criteria related to CAEP Standard R1, Component RA1.2 (Initial) and/or Standard RA1, Component RA1.2 (Advanced).
- 4.10.3. **CAEP Evidence Review of Standard 1/A.1.** Evidence for the CAEP Evidence Review of Standard 1/A.1 process is developed through the analysis of an EPP's outcome assessment data aligned to specialty licensure area standards delineated in CAEP Standard R1, Component RA1.2 (Initial) and/or Standard A1, Component RA1.2 (Advanced). Evidence from the EPP's internal assessment may be used by the state to determine its alignment with state required standards in the respective area(s) of licensure to demonstrate candidates' ability to apply content and pedagogical knowledge in the area of licensure.

- 4.11. The specific timeline established for the review of an EPP, as well as CAEP's consideration of any request for an extension, will be decided by CAEP or the Accreditation Council, as appropriate, on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with CAEP policies.
- 4.12. Once granted full accreditation by CAEP, an EPP's term of accreditation shall be seven (7) years. Shorter terms are granted with a decision of Accreditation with Stipulations or Probationary Accreditation. Throughout its term, to maintain accreditation, an EPP must comply with CAEP policies, including policies regarding payment of annual dues and the submission of annual reports.
- 4.13. An EPP for which the Accreditation Council issues a decision to deny or revoke accreditation may have a right to petition for an appeal subject to CAEP's policy on appeals.
- 4.14. The State will provide to CAEP its policy leading to a "Change in State Status." The State will notify CAEP within thirty (30) days of action taken when a CAEP-accredited EPP has had a "Change in State Status" as a result of a decision on specialized professional association (SPA) program status by the State.
- 4.15. Accreditation-specific terminology and definitions used by CAEP as part of its EPP review and accreditation processes may vary from similar terms and definitions used by the State. Any definitions of key terms and glossaries created by CAEP are available on the CAEP website [<http://caepnet.org/glossary>]. The State should inquire with CAEP about the definition of any term if there is uncertainty regarding its meaning in the CAEP accreditation context.

## **5. Opportunities for State Input**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 5.1. CAEP will afford the State multiple opportunities to provide CAEP, the Evaluation Team, and members of the Accreditation Council with any information or data the State deems relevant to the accreditation of an EPP, as follows:
- 5.2. At least sixteen (16) weeks prior to any scheduled Site Review, CAEP will give the State notice of the upcoming Site Review. At any time, up to six (6) weeks before the scheduled Site Review, the State may provide CAEP with comments and information on the EPP for consideration by the Evaluation Team. EPP's will be given an opportunity to respond to any such comments prior to the Site Review.
- 5.3. At any time, the State may file a complaint regarding an EPP with the Accreditation Council for investigation and consideration as part of the EPP's ongoing cycle of CAEP accreditation. In accordance with CAEP policy, adverse action may result from any such investigation.
- 5.4. In the event an EPP within the State petitions for the appeal of an adverse action of the Accreditation Council, CAEP will notify the State that such petition has been received. Any notification of a decision made by an ad-hoc appeal panel will be made in accordance with Section 7, below, and the detailed notification provisions included in CAEP policy.

## **6. Decisions of the Accreditation Council and an Ad-Hoc Appeals Council**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 6.1. The Accreditation Council makes decisions regarding the accreditation of EPP's at meetings held not less than two (2) times each year.
- 6.2. Following any decision of the Accreditation Council to deny or revoke the accreditation of an EPP, the EPP is promptly informed of its option to file a petition for an appeal and appeal requirements. Appeals criteria and process information are included in CAEP's policies on appeals.
- 6.3. CAEP provides written notice of each decision of the Accreditation Council and an Ad-hoc Appeal Panel in accordance with CAEP policies.
- 6.4. The written notice CAEP provides regarding its accrediting decisions, includes notice to the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency which may be a party to this agreement. CAEP's policies regarding notices specify the parties to which notice must be provided and the respective timelines for each.

## **7. Data Sharing**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 7.1. The CAEP Standards and process for CAEP Accreditation require an EPP to collect and share data. To the extent that the State maintains data necessary for CAEP's review of an EPP, subject to any data sharing agreement that may exist between an EPP and the State, CAEP expects that the State will make the relevant data available to EPP's at no cost, in a timely manner, with all personally identifiable information removed or redacted, and with all appropriate permissions to use the data for CAEP accreditation activities.
- 7.2. In order to facilitate the reviews necessary for CAEP accreditation, CAEP will provide the State and each dues paying EPP in the State with access to the CAEP accreditation platform, CAEP's data and information management system. Should the State or any EPP fail to pay annual dues to CAEP in a timely manner, CAEP reserves the right to suspend access to the CAEP accreditation platform until any outstanding dues are paid.
- 7.3. CAEP policies and the CAEP accreditation platform include information on the confidential nature of information maintained within the CAEP accreditation platform. All CAEP accreditation platform users must acknowledge CAEP's confidentiality policy and agree to adhere to it.

## **8. Partnership Dues, State Benefits, and Fees for Additional Services**

The Parties understand and agree that:



9. The State will be responsible for payment of annual State Partnership dues (See Appendix A). Dues may be reviewed and updated annually by CAEP. Should the amount of the State's annual State Partnership dues be changed during the term of this agreement, CAEP will notify the State of the new dues amount and the effective date.
- 9.1. CAEP will provide up to three (3) individuals employed by the State with access to the CAEP accreditation platform.
- 9.2. During each year covered by this agreement, CAEP will waive the CAEP State Clinic and CAEP Conference registration fee for one (1) designated State representative; however, the State or State representative must assume other expenses associated with conference participation.
- 9.3. CAEP offers states access to CAEP National Training for up to five (5) site reviewers a year, including training and travel (additional participants may be added based on need and on a cost-recovery basis). CAEP may also offer supplemental training opportunities for state reviewers. Supplemental training events that are arranged, including events in the State, will be provided by CAEP on a cost-recovery basis and with specific arrangements negotiated according to CAEP's policies regarding fees and expenses for training.
- 9.4. The State will work with associations that represent P-12 educators (NEA, AFT, NBPTS), EPP's, and education administrators to establish credit toward continuing education units or professional development requirements at the local district level in return for the State's P-12 educators' professional contributions to the work of CAEP as site review team members

## **10. State and CAEP Contacts**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 10.1. The State will designate a liaison to serve as the primary contact for CAEP throughout the term of this agreement.
- 10.2. CAEP will designate a liaison to serve as the primary contact for the State through the term of this agreement.

## **11. Agreement Term and Amendments**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 11.1. CAEP and the State enter into this partnership agreement for the one (1)-year period beginning July 1, 2025, and ending on June 30, 2026.
- 11.2. The Parties will review this agreement at least annually and, as necessary, propose any amendment deemed appropriate and which may be adopted upon the agreement of the Parties.
- 11.3. Should any provision of this agreement be determined to be in conflict with CAEP policy, CAEP policy will be the prevailing authority and this agreement will be required to be amended to resolve

the conflict.

11.4. Notwithstanding the annual review described above, this agreement may be modified by consent of the Parties at any point.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Christopher Koch, President  
Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

By signing this agreement, the undersigned agrees to be bound by the terms outlined above and affirms that he or she has the authority to enter into this agreement on behalf of the State.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signatory  
State Authority

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signatory  
State Authority

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

### **Appendix A: State Dues Structure**

Annual costs for supporting activities associated with State Partnerships have both fixed and proportional components which include costs associated with the CAEP Clinic, fall and spring CAEP Conferences, staff time, technology costs for maintaining workspaces within CAEP's accreditation platform, and other indirect expenses.

For the fixed and proportional amounts, states would be assessed \$1,500 annually (reviewed on an annual basis) to cover expenses for the spring convening and conference registration plus a portion of indirect expenses which are based on the actual percentage of CAEP member EPPs within each state.

#### **Example 1: State A (Joint Reviews)**

State A has 25 CAEP member EPPs, or 3.99% of total CAEP EPPs.

- The fixed amount is set at \$1,500 per state.
- The proportional amount is set at 3.99% of \$325,000 (current total=services to all states) = \$12,960.
- The variable joint review fee (for 25 joint reviews) is  $25 \times \$2,500 = \$62,500 / 7 \text{ years} = \$8,930$ .

Therefore, the total fees for State B will be:

\$1,500 (fixed) + \$12,960 (proportional) + \$8,930 (variable joint review fee) = \$23,390.

DRAFT

❖ ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – (Items 21-24)

Madalyn Quinlan

ITEM 21

ACTION ON THE CORRECTIVE NOTICE OF  
ADOPTION PERTAINING TO THE  
ADOPTION, AMENDMENT, AND REPEAL  
OF ARM, TITLE 10, CHAPTER 53,  
MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS,  
AND AUTHORIZE FILING OF THE NOTICE  
WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S  
OFFICE FOR PUBLICATION IN THE  
MONTANA ADMINISTRATIVE REGISTER

Madalyn Quinlan



**MONTANA  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
REGISTER**

**BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

---

**NOTICE OF ADOPTION**

**MAR NOTICE NO. 2024-170.1**

**Summary**

In the matter of the adoption of New Rules I through VII, the amendment of ARM 10.53.501, 10.53.502, 10.53.503, 10.53.504, 10.53.505, 10.53.506, 10.53.507, 10.53.508, 10.53.509, 10.53.510, and 10.53.511, and the repeal of ARM 10.53.512, 10.53.513, 10.53.514, 10.53.515, 10.53.516, and 10.53.517 pertaining to Mathematics Content Standards.

**Previous Notice(s) and Hearing Information**

On October 4, 2024, the Board of Public Education (board) published MAR No. 10-53-141 pertaining to the public hearing on the proposed amendment of the above-stated rules at page 2341 of the 2024 Montana Administrative Register, Issue Number 19.

---

**Final Rulemaking Action – Effective July 1, 2026**

**ADOPT AS PROPOSED**

The agency has adopted the following rules as proposed:

**NEW RULE I (10.53.518) CORE NUMERIC REASONING STANDARDS**

**NEW RULE III (10.53.520) CORE DATA REASONING AND PROBABILITY STANDARDS**

**NEW RULE IV (10.53.521) CORE GEOMETRIC REASONING STANDARDS**

**NEW RULE V (10.53.522) CORE PLUS NUMBER AND QUANTITY STANDARDS**

**NEW RULE VI (10.53.523) CORE PLUS ALGEBRAIC AND FUNCTIONAL REASONING STANDARDS**

**ADOPT WITH CHANGES**



The agency has adopted the following rules with changes from the original proposal, stricken matter interlined, new matter underlined:

#### **10.53.519 CORE ALGEBRAIC AND FUNCTIONAL REASONING STANDARDS**

- (1) The functions content standards for high school are to:
  - (a) interpret parts of an expression, such as terms, factors, and coefficients;
  - (b) understand the definition of a function and distinguish between functions and relations;
  - (c) represent functions using tables, graphs with appropriate scales and labels, equations, and verbal situations, while using technology strategically, by:
    - (i) understanding that different representations highlight different aspects of functions, and choosing the representation that is appropriate for the context; and
    - (ii) comparing properties of two functions, including when each is represented in a different way;
  - (d) use function notation, evaluate functions, and interpret statements that use function notation in context. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
  - (e) identify the domain and range of a function, including considering the constraints imposed by context. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
  - (f) understand that a graph of an equation in two variables is the set of all of its solutions plotted in a coordinate plane;
  - (g) understand that expressions can be rewritten in equivalent forms to make different characteristics or features visible; and
  - (h) rearrange literal equations to highlight quantities of interest.
- (2) The linear functions content standards for high school are to:
  - (a) understand that linear functions have a constant rate of change;
  - (b) understand slope as a rate of change and y-intercept as initial value;
  - (c) represent linear functions using tables, graphs, equations, and verbal situations, while using technology strategically. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities by:
    - (i) identifying the rate of change and initial value in each representation;

- (ii) converting between representations; and
    - (iii) writing equations for a line perpendicular or parallel to a given line that passes through a given point;
  - (d) understand that linear equations can be represented in multiple forms and the specific features of each form by:
    - (i) choosing the form strategically when writing an equation based on given information and intended use;
    - (ii) converting between slope-intercept, point-slope, and standard form symbolically;
    - (iii) understanding the relationship between slope-intercept form, the rate of change, and the initial value;
    - (iv) understanding the relationship between point-slope form, the rate of change, and a given point; and
    - (v) understanding the relationship between standard form and the x- and y-intercepts;
  - (e) understand that a solution to a system of equations is a coordinate pair that makes both equations true; and
  - (f) solve systems of linear equations by graphing, substitution, and elimination, including systems with zero, one, or infinite solutions, while using technology and representations strategically.
- (3) The quadratic functions and expressions content standards for high school are to:
- (a) understand that quadratic functions do not have a constant rate of change but have a constant second difference over equal intervals and identify the constant second difference in tables;
  - (b) represent quadratic functions using tables, graphs, equations, and verbal situations, while using technology strategically. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
  - (c) understand that quadratic expressions can be represented in multiple forms and the specific features of each form by:
    - (i) choosing the form strategically when writing an expression based on given information and intended use;
    - (ii) converting between factored, standard, and vertex form symbolically and using representations;

- (iii) understanding the relationship between factored form and the zeros of the function; and
  - (iv) understanding the relationship between vertex form and the vertex of the function.
- (d) solve quadratic equations by factoring, graphing, completing the square, using inverse operations, and the quadratic formula; use technology and representations strategically.
- (4) The exponential functions and expressions content standards for high school are to:
  - (a) understand that exponential functions have a constant common ratio over equal intervals, and identify the common ratio in tables and equations;
  - (b) understand  $a$  as the initial value and  $b$  as the growth/decay factor for an exponential function written in standard form,  $y=a*b^x$ ;
  - (c) understand the relationship between growth/decay factor and growth/decay rate;
  - (d) represent exponential functions using tables, graphs, equations, and verbal situations; using technology strategically. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities; and
  - (e) solve exponential equations graphically, while using technology strategically.
- (5) The modeling with functions content standards for high school are to:
  - (a) model situations in context, with linear, quadratic, and exponential functions. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities by:
    - (i) determining if a set of data is best modeled by a linear function, quadratic function, exponential function, or none, and explaining why; and
    - (ii) understanding that there are contexts where solutions may not lie on the curve;
  - (b) interpret the coefficients in a linear, quadratic, and exponential model in context. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities;
  - (c) choose and interpret measurement units in formulas, graphs, and data displays to understand problems and to guide problem-solving in modeling situations. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities; and

- (d) choose a level of accuracy appropriate to limitations on measurement when reporting quantities in modeling situations. This standard should incorporate cultural context relating to Montana Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101 MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-121, 20-3-106, 20-7-101, MCA

### **10.53.524 CORE PLUS DATA AND REASONING STANDARDS**

- (1) The normal distribution content standards for high school are to:
  - (a) determine if a data set is normally distributed;
  - ~~(b)~~(a) use technology to find the mean and standard deviation of a normally distributed data set and apply the empirical rule to estimate population percentages; and
  - ~~(c)~~(b) estimate areas under a normal curve to solve problems in context, using calculators, spreadsheets, and tables as appropriate.
- (2) The experimental design content standards for high school are to:
  - (a) describe the purposes of and differences among sample surveys, experiments, and observational studies and explain how randomization relates to each;
  - (b) describe differences between randomly selecting samples and randomly assigning subjects to experimental treatment groups in terms of inferences drawn regarding a population versus regarding cause and effect by:
    - (i) explaining the consequences, due to uncontrolled variables, of non-randomized assignment of subjects to groups in experiments; and
    - (ii) evaluating where bias, including sampling, response, or nonresponse bias, may occur in surveys, and whether results are representative of the population of interest;
  - (c) evaluate the effect of sample size on the expected variability in the sampling distribution of a sample statistic by:

- (i) simulating a sampling distribution of sample means from a population with a known distribution, observing the effect of the sample size on the variability; and
  - (ii) demonstrating that the standard deviation of each simulated sampling distribution is the known standard deviation of the population divided by the square root of the sample size.
- (3) The statistical inference using simulation content standards for high school are to:
  - (a) distinguish between a statistic and a parameter and use statistical processes to make inferences about population parameters based on statistics from random samples from that population;
  - (b) estimate a population parameter from a representative sample by:
    - (i) understanding why the sample statistic is the best estimate for the associated population parameter;
    - (ii) understanding that sampling variability introduces uncertainty in the estimate, and account for the uncertainty with a confidence interval by:
      - (A) using resampling with replacement from an observed sample to produce a sampling distribution;
      - (B) verifying that a sampling distribution is centered at the population mean and approximately normal if the sample size is large enough;
      - (C) verifying that 95% of sample means are within two standard deviations of the sampling distribution from the population mean; and
      - (D) creating and interpreting a 95% confidence interval based on an observed mean from a sampling distribution;
  - (c) use data from a randomized experiment to test the hypothesis that two groups are equal by:
    - (i) interpreting the difference or ratio between the group means as the observed effect between the groups; and
    - (ii) understanding that an observed effect may be due to randomization and using a randomization test (repeatedly reshuffling the observed data into new groups) to determine the probability that an observed effect is due to randomization alone.



**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-121, 20-3-106, 20-7-101, MCA

#### **AMEND AS PROPOSED**

The agency has amended the following rules as proposed:

**10.53.501 STANDARDS FOR MATHEMATICAL PRACTICE FOR GRADES K-12**

**10.53.502 MONTANA KINDERGARTEN MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.503 MONTANA GRADE 1 MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.504 MONTANA GRADE 2 MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.505 MONTANA GRADE 3 MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.506 MONTANA GRADE 4 MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.507 MONTANA GRADE 5 MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.508 MONTANA GRADE 6 MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.509 MONTANA GRADE 7 MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.510 MONTANA GRADE 8 MATHEMATICS CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.511 SYMBOLS**

#### **REPEAL AS PROPOSED**

The agency has repealed the following rules as proposed:

**10.53.512 MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS NUMBER AND QUANTITY STANDARDS**

**10.53.513 MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS ALGEBRA CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.514 MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS FUNCTIONS STANDARDS**

**10.53.515 MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS MODELING CONTENT STANDARDS**

**10.53.516 MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS GEOMETRY CONTENT STANDARDS**

## **10.53.517 MONTANA HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS STATISTICS AND PROBABILITY STANDARDS**

---

### **Statement of Reasons**

The Office of Public Instruction became aware of administrative errors where two rules were inadvertently omitted when transferred to the Board of Public Education: New Rule II – Core Algebraic and Functional Reasoning Standards item (3)(d) “solve quadratic equations by factoring, graphing, completing the square, using inverse operations, and the quadratic formula; use technology and representations strategically”.

Rationale for Inclusion: This skill is not new to Montana’s Content Standards and was adapted from multiple former standards contained within ARM 10.53.513 and ARM 10.53.514. This serves as a foundational skill for understanding quadratic functions, which are frequently used to model contextual scenarios in diverse fields such as business, finance, athletic analytics, engineering, environmental science, physics, and beyond. Ensuring mastery of this standard equips students with critical problem-solving skills necessary for post-secondary success, enabling them to interpret and analyze realistic situations mathematically, preparing them for careers in STEM fields, financial management, and other disciplines that require analytical, algebraic, and graphical reasoning.

New Rule VII – Core Plus Data and Reasoning Standards item (1)(a): determine if a data set is normally distributed; and updating item order for subsequent items.

Rational for Inclusion: This skill is not new to Montana’s Content Standards and was adapted, along with the two items following it, from 10.53.517(1)(d). This skill is essential as a prerequisite for items (1)(b) and (1)(c), which involve applying the principles of normal distribution. Students must first determine whether a data set is normally distributed before they can effectively analyze or interpret data using those principles. Expanding students’ ability to identify normal distribution is foundational to data literacy and enables students to critically evaluate and interpret data in academic, professional, and societal contexts. Proficiency in this skill prepares students for careers in fields such as healthcare, business analytics, economics, technology, and environmental science. Moreover, data literacy is increasingly essential for informed citizenship, improving individuals' ability to assess and evaluate information reliably, understand trends, and make evidence-based decisions.

---

### **Contact**

McCall Flynn  
(406) 444-6576  
bpe@mt.gov

---

**Rule Reviewer**

McCall Flynn, Executive Director

**Approval**

Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair

Montana Board of Public Education

**ITEM 22**

**ACTION ON PROVISIONAL  
ACCREDITATION STATUS OPTION FOR  
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS**

**Christy Mock-Stutz  
Crystal Andrews**

# Montana Board of Public Education

## Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	Action on Provisional Accreditation for Charter Schools
<b>Presenter</b>	Christy Mock-Stutz                      Crystal Andrews
<b>Position Title</b>	Assistant Chief Program Officer Accreditation and Licensure Senior Manager Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	Review and approve the provisional accreditation timeline for six charter schools.
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Action Item
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	The State Superintendent recommends approval of provisional accreditation for six charter schools.







## Provisional Accreditation Extension Timeline for Charter Schools

### Billings Early College School, Billings Public Schools

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
Formally apply for provisional accreditation extension.  Charter extension applicant submits letter of intent to the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) Accreditation, Licensure and Educator Preparation Senior Manager. Within the letter they will state how long they are seeking the extension. Submit letter to <a href="mailto:OPIAccred@mt.gov">OPIAccred@mt.gov</a> .  <b>Billings Early College School (High School) - 3 years (2027-2028)</b>	District	2024-2025	February 14, 2025
Charter extension applicant submits the following documentation:  Submit the below rubrics for progress review; they will be scored to receive first year provisional status for the 2024-2025 school year. The charters will still be considered in provisional accreditation.  <b>Rubrics: E, F, K, SP-A, SP-B, SP-C, CH-1, CH-2, CH-3, CH-4, CH-5, CH-7, CH-9, CH-10, CH-11, CH-13, CH-14</b>	District	2024-2025	February 28, 2025
The OPI Accreditation Unit presents a progress report of the initial charter extension applicant for discussion with the BPE. Provisional accreditation will be brought before the BPE. The extensions timeline will depend on the application and school type.	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025	March 2025
The OPI review team provides the school district and school personnel a report. The report may include areas for improvement, when applicable as related to the expectations outlined in the ARMs related to rubric E, F, K.	District	2024-2025	March-April 2025

<p>If approved by the state Superintendent it will be recommended to the BPE to maintain provisional accreditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The charter must maintain regular or regular with minor deviations on rubrics E, F, and K individually in order to have a successful completion.</li> <li>• Accreditation deviations resulting in advice or deficiency status during this period will result in the loss of provisional approval of accreditation status.</li> </ul>	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
---	----------------------	--	--

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
After successful completion of annual provisional accreditation status the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the accreditation status of the school based on the recommendation of the state superintendent of public education.	BPE	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
Provisional charter school submits all the accreditation documentation for consideration of full accreditation status.	Charter	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
After successful completion of the provisional accreditation status, the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the full accreditation status of the charter school based on the recommendation of the State Superintendent.	BPE	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028



## Provisional Accreditation Extension Timeline

### Billings Multilingual Academy High School, Billings Public Schools

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
Formally apply for provisional accreditation extension.  Charter extension applicant submits letter of intent to the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) Accreditation, Licensure and Educator Preparation Senior Manager. Within the letter they will state how long they are seeking the extension. Submit letter to <a href="mailto:OPIAccred@mt.gov">OPIAccred@mt.gov</a> .  <b>Billings Multilingual Academy</b> (High School) - 3 years (2027-2028)	District	2024-2025	February 14, 2025
Charter extension applicant submits the following documentation:  Submit the below rubrics for progress review; they will be scored to receive first year provisional status for the 2024-2025 school year. The charters will still be considered in provisional accreditation.  <b>Rubrics: E, F, K, SP-A, SP-B, SP-C, CH-1, CH-2, CH-3, CH-4, CH-5, CH-7, CH-9, CH-10, CH-11, CH-13, CH-14</b>	District	2024-2025	February 28, 2025
The OPI Accreditation Unit presents a progress report of the initial charter extension applicant for discussion with the BPE. Provisional accreditation will be brought before the BPE. The extensions timeline will depend on the application and school type.	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025	March 2025
The OPI review team provides the school district and school personnel a report. The report may include areas for improvement, when applicable as related to the expectations outlined in the ARMs related to rubric E, F, K.	District	2024-2025	March-April 2025

<p>If approved by the state Superintendent it will be recommended to the BPE to maintain provisional accreditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The charter must maintain regular or regular with minor deviations on rubrics E, F, and K individually in order to have a successful completion.</li> <li>• Accreditation deviations resulting in advice or deficiency status during this period will result in the loss of provisional approval of accreditation status.</li> </ul>	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
---	----------------------	--	--

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
After successful completion of annual provisional accreditation status the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the accreditation status of the school based on the recommendation of the state superintendent of public education.	BPE	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
Provisional charter school submits all the accreditation documentation for consideration of full accreditation status.	Charter	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
After successful completion of the provisional accreditation status, the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the full accreditation status of the charter school based on the recommendation of the State Superintendent.	BPE	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028



## Provisional Accreditation Extension Timeline

### Billings Multilingual Academy Middle School, Billings Public Schools

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
Formally apply for provisional accreditation extension.  Charter extension applicant submits letter of intent to the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) Accreditation, Licensure and Educator Preparation Senior Manager. Within the letter they will state how long they are seeking the extension. Submit letter to <a href="mailto:OPIAccred@mt.gov">OPIAccred@mt.gov</a> .  <b>Billings Multilingual Academy</b> (Middle School) - 2 years (2026-2027)	District	2024-2025	February 14, 2025
Charter extension applicant submits the following documentation:  Submit the below rubrics for progress review; they will be scored to receive first year provisional status for the 2024-2025 school year. The charters will still be considered in provisional accreditation.  <b>Rubrics: E, F, K, SP-A, SP-B, SP-C, CH-1, CH-2, CH-3, CH-4, CH-5, CH-7, CH-9, CH-10, CH-11, CH-13, CH-14</b>	District	2024-2025	February 28, 2025
The OPI Accreditation Unit presents a progress report of the initial charter extension applicant for discussion with the BPE. Provisional accreditation will be brought before the BPE. The extensions timeline will depend on the application and school type.	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025	March 2025
The OPI review team provides the school district and school personnel a report. The report may include areas for improvement, when applicable as related to the expectations outlined in the ARMs related to rubric E, F, K.	District	2024-2025	March-April 2025



<p>If approved by the state Superintendent it will be recommended to the BPE to maintain provisional accreditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The charter must maintain regular or regular with minor deviations on rubrics E, F, and K individually in order to have a successful completion.</li> <li>• Accreditation deviations resulting in advice or deficiency status during this period will result in the loss of provisional approval of accreditation status.</li> </ul>	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027
---	----------------------	-------------------------------------	----------------------------------

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
After successful completion of annual provisional accreditation status the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the accreditation status of the school based on the recommendation of the state superintendent of public education.	BPE	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027
Provisional charter school submits all the accreditation documentation for consideration of full accreditation status.	Charter	2025-2026 2026-2027	May 2026 May 2027
After successful completion of the provisional accreditation status, the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the full accreditation status of the charter school based on the recommendation of the State Superintendent.	BPE	2025-2026 2026-2027	May 2026 May 2027



## Provisional Accreditation Extension Timeline

### Billings Opportunity School, Billings Public Schools

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
Formally apply for provisional accreditation extension.  Charter extension applicant submits letter of intent to the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) Accreditation, Licensure and Educator Preparation Senior Manager. Within the letter they will state how long they are seeking the extension. Submit letter to <a href="mailto:OPIAccred@mt.gov">OPIAccred@mt.gov</a> .  <b>Billings Opportunity School</b> (High School) - 3 years (2027-2028)	District	2024-2025	February 14, 2025
Charter extension applicant submits the following documentation:  Submit the below rubrics for progress review; they will be scored to receive first year provisional status for the 2024-2025 school year. The charters will still be considered in provisional accreditation.  <b>Rubrics: E, F, K, SP-A, SP-B, SP-C, CH-1, CH-2, CH-3, CH-4, CH-5, CH-7, CH-9, CH-10, CH-11, CH-13, CH-14</b>	District	2024-2025	February 28, 2025
The OPI Accreditation Unit presents a progress report of the initial charter extension applicant for discussion with the BPE. Provisional accreditation will be brought before the BPE. The extensions timeline will depend on the application and school type.	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025	March 2025
The OPI review team provides the school district and school personnel a report. The report may include areas for improvement, when applicable as related to the expectations outlined in the ARMs related to rubric E, F, K.	District	2024-2025	March-April 2025

<p>If approved by the state Superintendent it will be recommended to the BPE to maintain provisional accreditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The charter must maintain regular or regular with minor deviations on rubrics E, F, and K individually in order to have a successful completion.</li> <li>• Accreditation deviations resulting in advice or deficiency status during this period will result in the loss of provisional approval of accreditation status.</li> </ul>	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
---	----------------------	--	--

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
After successful completion of annual provisional accreditation status the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the accreditation status of the school based on the recommendation of the state superintendent of public education.	BPE	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
Provisional charter school submits all the accreditation documentation for consideration of full accreditation status.	Charter	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
After successful completion of the provisional accreditation status, the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the full accreditation status of the charter school based on the recommendation of the State Superintendent.	BPE	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028



## Provisional Accreditation Extension Timeline

### Rise Charter and Distance Learning Academy, Corvallis School District

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
Formally apply for provisional accreditation extension.  Charter extension applicant submits letter of intent to the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) Accreditation, Licensure and Educator Preparation Senior Manager. Within the letter they will state how long they are seeking the extension. Submit letter to <a href="mailto:OPIAccred@mt.gov">OPIAccred@mt.gov</a> .  <b>Rise Charter and Distance High School - 3 years (2027-2028)</b> <b>Rise Charter and Distance Middle School/Elementary - 2 years (2026-2027)</b>	District	2024-2025	February 14, 2025
Charter extension applicant submits the following documentation:  Submit the below rubrics for progress review; they will be scored to receive first year provisional status for the 2024-2025 school year. The charters will still be considered in provisional accreditation.  <b>Rubrics: E, F, K, SP-A, SP-B, SP-C, CH-1, CH-2, CH-3, CH-4, CH-5, CH-7, CH-9, CH-10, CH-11, CH-13, CH-14</b>	District	2024-2025	February 28, 2025
The OPI Accreditation Unit presents a progress report of the initial charter extension applicant for discussion with the BPE. Provisional accreditation will be brought before the BPE. The extensions timeline will depend on the application and school type.	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025	March 2025
The OPI review team provides the school district and school personnel a report. The report may include areas for improvement, when applicable as related to the expectations outlined in the ARMs related to rubric E, F, K.	District	2024-2025	March-April 2025

<p>If approved by the state Superintendent it will be recommended to the BPE to maintain provisional accreditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The charter must maintain regular or regular with minor deviations on rubrics E, F, and K individually in order to have a successful completion.</li> <li>Accreditation deviations resulting in advice or deficiency status during this period will result in the loss of provisional approval of accreditation status.</li> </ul>	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028*	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
---	----------------------	---	--

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
After successful completion of annual provisional accreditation status the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the accreditation status of the school based on the recommendation of the state superintendent of public education.	BPE	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028*	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
Provisional charter school submits all the accreditation documentation for consideration of full accreditation status.	Charter	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028*	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
After successful completion of the provisional accreditation status, the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the full accreditation status of the charter school based on the recommendation of the State Superintendent.	BPE	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028*	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028

**\*High School only**





## Provisional Accreditation Extension Timeline

### Rise Charter and Pathway Learning Academy, Corvallis School District

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
Formally apply for provisional accreditation extension.  Charter extension applicant submits letter of intent to the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) Accreditation, Licensure and Educator Preparation Senior Manager. Within the letter they will state how long they are seeking the extension. Submit letter to <a href="mailto:OPIAccred@mt.gov">OPIAccred@mt.gov</a> .  <b>Rise Charter and Pathway High School</b> - 3 years (2027-2028) <b>Rise Charter and Pathway Middle School/Elementary</b> - 2 years (2026-2027)	District	2024-2025	February 14, 2025
Charter extension applicant submits the following documentation:  Submit the below rubrics for progress review; they will be scored to receive first year provisional status for the 2024-2025 school year. The charters will still be considered in provisional accreditation.  <b>Rubrics: E, F, K, SP-A, SP-B, SP-C, CH-1, CH-2, CH-3, CH-4, CH-5, CH-7, CH-9, CH-10, CH-11, CH-13, CH-14</b>	District	2024-2025	February 28, 2025
The OPI Accreditation Unit presents a progress report of the initial charter extension applicant for discussion with the BPE. Provisional accreditation will be brought before the BPE. The extensions timeline will depend on the application and school type.	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025	March 2025
The OPI review team provides the school district and school personnel a report. The report may include areas for improvement, when applicable as related to the expectations outlined in the ARMs related to rubric E, F, K.	District	2024-2025	March-April 2025

<p>If approved by the state Superintendent it will be recommended to the BPE to maintain provisional accreditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The charter must maintain regular or regular with minor deviations on rubrics E, F, and K individually in order to have a successful completion.</li> <li>• Accreditation deviations resulting in advice or deficiency status during this period will result in the loss of provisional approval of accreditation status.</li> </ul>	OPI Accreditation	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028*	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028

Accreditation Step	Completed By	School Year	Anticipated Date
After successful completion of annual provisional accreditation status the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the accreditation status of the school based on the recommendation of the state superintendent of public education.	BPE	2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028*	May 2025 May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
Provisional charter school submits all the accreditation documentation for consideration of full accreditation status.	Charter	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028*	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028
After successful completion of the provisional accreditation status, the Board of Public Education takes final action as to the full accreditation status of the charter school based on the recommendation of the State Superintendent.	BPE	2025-2026 2026-2027 2027-2028*	May 2026 May 2027 May 2028

**\*High School only**

## **ITEM 23**

### **ACTION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROCEDURES AND SCHEDULES FOR JOINT ACCREDITATION**

**Dr. Julie Murgel  
Crystal Andrews**

# Montana Board of Public Education Executive Summary

**Date:** March 11-12, 2025

<b>Presentation</b>	Cognia Joint Accreditation Process
<b>Presenter</b>	Julie Murgel                      Crystal Andrews
<b>Position Title</b>	Chief Program Officer Accreditation and Licensure Senior Manager Office of Public Instruction
<b>Overview</b>	Montana K-12 districts/schools may voluntarily choose to seek national accreditation through Cognia and State Joint- accreditation.
<b>Requested Decision(s)</b>	Information only
<b>Related Issue(s)</b>	10.55
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	None





## Joint Accreditation K-12 Proposal

	State Only Accreditation	Joint Accreditation
<b>Accreditation Approval Authority</b>	<p>Montana BPE approves and accredits every Montana K-12 school based the results of accreditation review of standards of accreditation (ARM 10.55) and recommendation by the state superintendent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The conditions under which each elementary school, each middle school, each junior high school, 7th and 8th grades funded at high school rates, and each high school operates must be reviewed by the superintendent of public instruction to determine compliance with the <b>standards of accreditation</b>. 20-7-102(1), MCA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As used in this section, "7th and 8th grades funded at high school rates" means an elementary school district or K-12 district elementary program whose 7th and 8th grades are funded as provided in <a href="#">20-9-306(15)(c)(ii)</a>.</li> <li>A nonpublic school may, through its governing body, request that the board of public education accredit the school. Nonpublic schools may be accredited in the same manner as provided in subsection (1).</li> </ul> </li> <li>The <b>accreditation status</b> of each school must then be established by the board of public education upon the recommendation of the superintendent of public instruction. 20-7-102(1), MCA</li> </ul>	
<b>Accreditation Selection Type State Only or Joint Accreditation</b>		Montana K-12 districts/schools may voluntarily choose to seek national accreditation through Cognia and State Joint-accreditation
<b>Accreditation Cycles</b>	<p><b>20-7-102 (2)</b> A school may be accredited for a period consisting of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 school years, except that multiyear accreditation may be granted only to schools that are in compliance with <a href="#">20-4-101</a>.</p> <p><b>Starting in 2026—3-year cycles based on ISAP 10.55.601</b></p>	
<b>Categories of Accreditation</b>	<p><a href="#">ARM 10.55.605</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Regular Accreditation</b></li> <li><b>Regular with minor Deviation Accreditation</b></li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advice Accreditation</b></li> <li>• <b>Deficiency Accreditation</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Accreditation Process</b>	<p><a href="#">ARM 10.55.606:</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>categories of accreditation</b> of a school shall be determined by using two sets of standards: (a) <b>assurance standards</b>; and (b) <b>student performance standards</b>. (2)</li> <li>• <b>Assurance standards</b> are comprised of the following subchapters in ARM Title 10, chapter 55: (a) Subchapter 6, General Provisions, ARM 10.55.601 through 10.55.608; (b) Subchapter 7, School Leadership, ARM 10.55.701 through 10.55.724; (c) Subchapter 8, Educational Opportunity, ARM 10.55.801 through 10.55.806; (d) Subchapter 9, Academic Requirements, ARM 10.55.901 through 10.55.911; and (e) ARM 10.55.1001 through 10.55.2301.</li> <li>• <b>Student performance standards</b> are comprised of measures required under ARM 10.56.101(3) and other measures described in the state accountability system, defined in ARM 10.55.602, recommended by the state superintendent and approved by the Board of Public Education.</li> </ul>	
<b>Standards of Accreditation: Assurance Standards</b>	<p><a href="#">Subchapter 10.55.6 General Provisions</a></p> <p><a href="#">*10.55.601(3) and (4) ISAP</a></p> <p><a href="#">*10.55.603 Curriculum and Assessment</a></p> <p><a href="#">Subchapter 10.55.7 School Leadership</a></p> <p><a href="#">Subchapter 10.55.8 Educational Opportunity</a></p> <p><a href="#">Subchapter 10.55.9 Academic Requirements</a></p> <p><a href="#">Subchapter 10.55.10 Program Area Standards</a></p> <p><a href="#">Subchapter 10.55.11 English Language Arts and Literacy: Program</a></p> <p><a href="#">Subchapter 10.55.12 Arts: Program</a></p> <p><a href="#">Subchapter 10.55.13 Health and Physical Education: Program</a></p>	<p><b>Cognia:</b> BPE approves accreditation standards and accepts Cognia's approval of the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARM 10.55.603</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.714 (1 and 3)</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.717-724</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.801-806</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.1001 through 10.55.2301.</li> </ul> <p><b>OPI:</b> BPE approves accreditation standards and accepts OPI's approval of the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARM 10.55.601- - ISAP is a requirement beyond accreditation purposes (federal requirement)</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.701- is an assurance</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.702-713- - requires IC data or is an assurance</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.714 (2)- could evaluate 1, 3 not 2- requires data</li> </ul>

	<p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.14 Mathematics: Program</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.15 Science: Program</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.16 Social Studies: Program</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.17 Career and Technical Education: Program</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.18 Library Media and Information Literacy: Program</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.19 School Counseling: Program</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.20 School Facilities and Records</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.21 World Languages: Program</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.22 Computer Science: Program</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Subchapter 10.55.23 Technology Integration: Program</u></a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARM 10.55.715-716- - requires IC data or is an assurance (federal requirement)</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.901-902- evaluation of IEFA and requires IC data</li> <li>• ARM 10.55.904-911 - stays with OPI- evaluation of IEFA and requires IC data</li> </ul>
<b>Standards of Accreditation: Performance Standards</b>	<p><b>Student performance standards</b> are comprised of measures required under ARM 10.56.101(3) and other measures described in the state accountability system, defined in ARM 10.55.602, recommended by the state superintendent and approved by the Board of Public Education.</p>	
<p><b>Assurance Rubrics</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>FY2025 Criteria Ref. Guide.pdf</u></a></p>	<p>A. Integrated Strategic Action Plan - Process (CNA)</p> <p>B. Integrated Strategic Action Plan - Content (Goals)</p> <p>C. Integrated Strategic Action Plan - Content (Graduate Profile)</p> <p>D. District Assurances</p> <p>E. Assignment and Licensure of Staff</p> <p>F. Teacher Load and Class</p>	<p><b>Cognia: Provide scores 1-4 for rubrics:</b></p> <p>A. Integrated Strategic Action Plan - Process (CNA)</p> <p>H. Family and Community Engagement</p> <p>M. Proficiency-Based Learning Model - Curriculum</p> <p>N. Proficiency-Based Learning Model - Assessment</p> <p>O. Educator Effectiveness - Professional Development Plan</p>

	<p>G. Professional Development</p> <p>H. Family and Community Engagement</p> <p>I. Basic Education Program Offerings (High School and Middle School only)</p> <p>J. Indian Education for All</p> <p>K. Indian Education for All</p> <p>L. Integrated Strategic Action Plan - Graduate Profile</p> <p>M. Proficiency-Based Learning Model - Curriculum</p> <p>N. Proficiency-Based Learning Model - Assessment</p> <p>O. Educator Effectiveness - Professional Development Plan</p> <p>P. Educator Effectiveness - Mentorship &amp; Induction</p> <p>Q. Educator Effectiveness - Evaluation</p> <p>R. Educational Opportunity - School Climate</p>	<p>P. Educator Effectiveness - Mentorship &amp; Induction</p> <p>Q. Educator Effectiveness - Evaluation</p> <p>R. Educational Opportunity - School Climate</p> <p><b>OPI provides scores for rubrics:</b></p> <p>B. Integrated Strategic Action Plan - Content (Goals)</p> <p>C. Integrated Strategic Action Plan - Content (Graduate Profile)</p> <p>D. District Assurances</p> <p>E. Assignment and Licensure of Staff</p> <p>F. Teacher Load and Class</p> <p>G. Professional Development</p> <p>I. Basic Education Program Offerings (High School and Middle School only)</p> <p>J. Indian Education for All</p> <p>K. Indian Education for All</p> <p>L. Integrated Strategic Action Plan - Graduate Profile</p>
--	---	---

**ITEM 24**

**ACTION ON THE COGNIA JOINT  
ACCREDITATION MEMORANDUM OF  
UNDERSTANDING**

**Madalyn Quinlan**

**Montana Board of Public Education,  
the Montana Office of Public Instruction,  
and Cognia  
Memorandum of Understanding**

Whereas Cognia, Inc. (“Cognia”) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, and as a voluntary membership organization it is committed to creating effective schools through the use of performance-based accreditation; and

Whereas Cognia accredits schools through its proprietary, evidence-based accreditation process and standards that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen K-12 student learning and outcomes; and

Whereas Cognia is a nationally recognized accreditor and parent company to three of the six K-12 Regional Accreditors in the United States: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS-CASI), North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), and Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC); and

Whereas, the Montana Board of Public Education, and the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), herein referred to as the State, support continuous improvement through accreditation;

Therefore, Cognia and the State hereby enter into this Memorandum of Understanding detailing the State’s preferences with regard to review options conducted by Cognia of accredited schools residing within the state of Montana and establishing the primary responsibilities each party has in supporting the accreditation activities.

**1. Cognia Standards and Scope of Accreditation**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 1.1. The Cognia Global Accreditation Commission has adopted standards that serve as the basis for all accreditation reviews undertaken by Cognia (the “Standards”). The Standards may be revised from time to time, and Cognia will provide the State with any changes to Standards as they are revised.
- 1.2. Cognia and the State, during the Term of this Memorandum of Understanding, will work together in good faith to establish an operational plan to further the accreditation activities.
- 1.3. It is the responsibility of the State and any schools seeking or continuing Cognia accreditation to stay informed of any changes made to the Cognia Standards and the timeline(s) for the implementation of or transition to new or revised Standards.
- 1.4. The Cognia scope of accreditation, defined in the Cognia Policies and Procedures for Accreditation and Certification (the “Policies and Procedures”), distinguishes between three levels of accreditation for member schools: Accredited, Accredited Under Review, and Accredited Under Conditions.



- 1.5. The State will recognize accredited Cognia schools as accredited by the state of Montana. All Accreditation Reports will be provided to the State's Accreditation Unit at the OPI for review.

## **2. Cognia's Responsibility for Accreditation**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 2.1. Cognia has sole responsibility for granting Cognia accreditation to a school, and for supporting and overseeing continuous accreditation, as described in Cognia Standards, Policies and Procedures, and any required assurances.
- 2.2. The process required for accreditation by Cognia is outlined in Cognia Policies and Procedures. Policies and Procedures may be revised from time to time. It is the responsibility of the State and any school seeking Cognia accreditation to stay informed of any such changes as they may impact the Cognia accreditation process from the time of their adoption or publication.

## **3. State's Responsibility for Accreditation**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 3.1. The State has responsibility for accreditation approval and the category of accreditation determined for any school. In granting accreditation approval, the State will utilize information generated from Cognia's review(s) of a school. The State may elect to have state-specific standards and/or requirements incorporated into the Cognia review, consistent with the accreditation review options outlined below. Schools participating in Cognia Accreditation will also be required to provide the State with documents related to Student Performance Standards and Assurance Standards, including, but not limited to, Annual Data Collection, Indian Education for All Data, and any data required for federal reporting.
- 3.2. The State will periodically review its accreditation review requirements against the Cognia Standards and Policies and will, in a timely manner, make Cognia aware of any conflicts or potential inconsistencies so that all parties to this agreement are aware of any such issues and can work constructively together to minimize any challenges that may arise from them.

## **4. Cognia Accreditation Cycle**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 4.1. The Cognia accreditation cycle involves a school in continuous improvement and requires the school to demonstrate that it meets Cognia's high standards of quality required to improve student learning.
- 4.2. The Cognia accreditation cycle will be a three-year term of accreditation, to align with the State accreditation cycle. However, schools may be required to complete a progress report related to their improvement priorities. The State will receive progress reports. To merit full accreditation by Cognia, a school must meet all Standards, Policies and Procedures, and

assurances based on sufficient and accurate evidence

- 4.3. For onsite Accreditation Engagement Reviews, the State will be invited to serve as team members. Cognia will require and provide training at no expense for these team members. Team members must acknowledge understanding of, and agreement to adhere to, Cognia's code of conduct, including with regard to confidentiality and conflicts of interest, provided they do not conflict with any state laws of Montana.
- 4.4. All Engagement Review activities undertaken by Cognia will be conducted in accordance with Cognia Policies and Procedures.
- 4.5. Cognia is not responsible for any expenses incurred by state-assigned personnel as part of the review process or otherwise related to this Memorandum of Understanding.
- 4.6. Once granted full accreditation by Cognia, a school's term of accreditation shall be three (3) years. Throughout its term, to maintain accreditation, a school must comply with Cognia Policies, including policies regarding payment of annual dues and the submission of annual reports.
- 4.7 If a school is determined to be in "Accredited Under Review" status, Cognia personnel will conduct annual monitoring until Cognia deems that the organization has substantively met all Cognia Standards, Policies and Procedures, and satisfied assurances or is found to have made insufficient progress, resulting in a change in status to "Accredited Under Conditions."
- 4.8 Accreditation-specific terminology and definitions used by Cognia as part of its school and accreditation processes may vary from similar terms and definitions used by the State. Any definitions of key terms and glossaries created by Cognia will be made available on the Cognia website [www.cognia.org](http://www.cognia.org). In the event of a conflict between accreditation-specific terminology and definitions used by Cognia and terms and definitions used by the State, Cognia terminology and definitions shall control with respect to Cognia accreditation and State terms and definitions shall control with respect to State accreditation.

## **5. Opportunities for State Input**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 5.1. Cognia will afford the State opportunities to provide the evaluators, members of Cognia's Montana Advisory Council, and/or Cognia's Global Accreditation Commission with any information or data the State deems relevant to the accreditation of the school.
- 5.2. Cognia will give the State notice of an upcoming Site Review. At any time, up to six (6) weeks before the scheduled Site Review, the State may provide Cognia with comments and information on the school for consideration.
- 5.3. At any time, the State may file a complaint regarding a Cognia member school with the Cognia's Office of Accreditation Services for investigation and consideration as part of the school's ongoing accreditation cycle. Complaints filed by the State will be investigated in accordance with Cognia's Policies and Procedures.

## **6. Data Sharing**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 6.1. The Cognia Standards and process for Cognia Accreditation require a school to collect and share data.
- 6.2. Cognia will provide the State and each dues paying school in the State with access to the Cognia accreditation platform and Cognia's data and information management system. In the event any school fails to pay their annual dues to Cognia in a timely manner, Cognia reserves the right to suspend access to all Cognia platforms and systems until any outstanding dues are paid.
- 6.3. Cognia Policies and the Cognia accreditation platform include Confidential Information. The State covenants and agrees that it shall protect all Cognia Confidential Information both during and after the Term, and shall not disclose to any person or otherwise use, except in connection with the accreditation activities in accordance with this Memorandum of Understanding, any of the other Cognia's Confidential Information. "Cognia Confidential Information" is defined as any and all technical, business and other information of Cognia or any affiliate of Cognia which derives value, economic or otherwise, actual or potential, from not being generally known to the public or other persons who can obtain value from its use or disclosure. Cognia Confidential Information includes "Confidential Personal Information", which is defined as any information that directly or indirectly identifies or relates to an identified or identifiable natural person. Cognia Confidential Information does not include any information (i) that is or comes into the public domain through no fault of the State, (ii) rightfully in the possession of State in written form as of the Effective Date hereof or hereafter independently developed by the State without reference to any of the Cognia's Confidential Information, or (iii) that is required to be disclosed by order of a court or tribunal of competent jurisdiction or by any law. All Cognia accreditation platform users must acknowledge Cognia's confidentiality policy and agree to adhere to it. As used in this Memorandum of Understanding, "Person" means any individual, corporation, limited liability company or partnership, bank, partnership, joint venture, association, joint-stock company, trust, unincorporated organization or other entity.
- 6.4. Upon the terms and conditions of the Memorandum of Understanding, Cognia grants the State a limited, non-exclusive, non-transferable, royalty-free licensure to use certain copyrighted materials owned by Cognia that may be provided by Cognia from time to time during the Term of this Memorandum of Understanding for use solely in connection with the accreditation activities. All rights and licenses of any kind in the Cognia materials not expressly granted in this Memorandum of Understanding are reserved exclusively to Cognia. The State acknowledges Cognia's ownership of the materials and agrees not to contest this ownership. The State will not allow others to use the materials without Cognia's prior written consent.

## **7. Partnership Benefits and Fees for Additional Services**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 7.1 Cognia will provide for up to three (3) individuals employed by the State with access to the Cognia accreditation platform and digital tool kit.
- 7.2 The State will provide P-12 educators and education administrators with professional development units for contributions to work on Cognia accreditation as site review team members.
- 7.3 Cognia shall have the right to sell or set fees for Cognia services, whether contemplated in this Memorandum of Understanding or outside of the scope of the accreditation activities and this Memorandum of Understanding, at a price subject to its sole discretion. Cognia shall in no way be bound by any price or fee which may be recommended or suggested by the State.

## **8. State and Cognia Contacts**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 8.1. The State will designate a liaison to serve as the primary contact for Cognia throughout the Term of this agreement.
- 8.2. Cognia will designate a liaison to serve as the primary contact for the State through the Term of this agreement.

## **9. Agreement Term and Amendments**

The Parties understand and agree that:

- 9.1. Cognia and the State enter into this partnership agreement for XX (XX)-year beginning July 1, 2025 and ending on June 30, 20XX (the “Term”).
- 9.2. The Parties will review this agreement at least annually and, as necessary, propose any amendment deemed appropriate, which may be adopted upon the agreement of the Parties.
- 9.3. Should any provision of this agreement be determined to be in conflict with Cognia policy, state and federal law, or the State’s administrative rules, this agreement will be required to be amended to resolve the conflict.
- 9.4. Notwithstanding the annual review described above, this agreement may be modified by consent of the Parties at any point.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark A. Elgart, Chief Executive Officer  
Cognia, Inc.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

By signing this agreement, the undersigned agrees to be bound by the terms outlined above and affirms that he or she has the authority to enter into this agreement on behalf of the State.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair  
Montana Board of Public Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Susie Hedalen, Superintendent  
Office of Public Instruction

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE



## **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS May 15-16, 2025**

Student Representative Last Meeting & Recognition

MACIE Update

*Action on K-12 Schools Payment Schedule*

*Assessment Update*

*Accreditation Update*

*Action on CAEP MOU*

*Federal Update*

*Content Standards Revision Update*

*Action on Accreditation Status of All Schools*

**Executive Director Performance Evaluation**