

PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION

Name of Public Charter School: Bozeman Charter School (BoCS)

Provide an executive summary with the general purpose and rationale for the creation of the public charter school.

The Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) has operated as a Montana Board of Public Education approved charter school consistent with ARM 10-55-604 since the spring of 2021. The initial approval was for two years, expiring at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. The BoCS was successfully renewed for three additional years in the spring of 2023, with the approval now extending through June 30, 2026.

Bozeman Public Schools wishes to submit the Bozeman Charter School for consideration as a public charter school under the control of the Bozeman Public Schools Board of Trustees consistent with the process established in HB549.

Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) is a competency based, expeditionary learning, flexible school that supports three learning pathways for students in grades 3-8. Families can choose between all remote learning, remote learning with Wednesday in-person excursions, or an all-in blend model including daily remote learning, PE, art, and other in-person class work. Core instruction (Math, ELA, SS, and Science) is offered in a synchronous remote classroom fashion each day in the morning. The afternoons are in-person and tailored to the needs of the students (electives, interventions, extensions, social-emotional learning, and expeditionary learning in the community).

Details regarding the three learning pathways are below. Students not demonstrating proficiency in core academics are required to attend in-person to receive intervention and support:

<u>Pathway 1: Remote Only</u>	<u>Pathway 2: Remote + Expeditionary Learning</u>	<u>Pathway 3: Remote + Expeditionary + In-Person</u>
Characteristics to be successful	Characteristics to be successful	Characteristics to be successful
<p>Remote: Ability to work independently; willingly engages in the learning; generally does not need additional support beyond whole group instruction to master content; strong time management skills</p>	<p>Remote: Ability to work independently; willingly engages in the learning; generally does not need additional support beyond whole group instruction to master content; strong time management skills</p> <p>Expeditionary: Engage with content and peers during expeditionary learning trips</p>	<p>Remote: Ability to work independently; willingly engages in the learning; strong time management skills</p> <p>In-person: Engage with teacher and peers during instruction; willingness to ask questions and seek help when needed</p> <p>Expeditionary: Engage with content and peers during expeditionary learning trips</p>

The following three specific goal areas that were stipulated in the the original charter program application still define the Bozeman Charter School today and serve as the foundational goals for this application:

a. Instruction, Assessment and Culture:

- i. *Competency-Based Education:* The BoCS implements a competency-based pathway through the 3-8 curriculum. A generally accepted definition of a competency-based system is one that “creates flexibility by allowing students to progress as they demonstrate proficiency with academic content and skills, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning. Competency based strategies provide flexibility in the way that credit can be earned or awarded, and provide students with personalized learning opportunities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Specifically, the BoCS includes:
 1. Standards-based learning scores that communicate progress towards mastery as defined by rigorous competencies, aligned with local, state, and national standards;
 2. Advancement upon mastery of rigorous competencies;
 3. Personalized learning plans focused on individual learner growth;
 4. Learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom and school model; (ie. live remote classes, asynchronous learning activities, small group in-person meetings for support, intervention, community building, and opportunities for experiential education)
 5. Flexible scheduling that supports the various needs, challenges, and opportunities of our students and their families.
- ii. *Assessment & Accountability:* In order to ensure learners progress in a way to ensure they are College and Career ready, the BoCS implements a system of assessment in order to monitor individual learner growth and achievement, evaluate the quality and efficacy of the program, and provide transparency to all stakeholders. Specifically, the BoCS will include:
 1. a rigorous system of assessment, including screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcomebased measurements;
 2. personalized learning plans, instructional decisions, and advancement based on assessment and portfolio of learning; and
 3. measurable program goals.
- iii. *Climate & Culture:* The BoCS creates a safe, supportive, engaging and healthy school environment that promotes a sincere sense of community among students, parents/guardians, and staff. Specifically, the BoCS includes:
 1. a modified school counseling program that supports social/emotional and academic needs, and;
 2. at the middle school level, an advisory program focused on behavior, social, and emotional goals;
 3. trauma informed prevention and intervention strategies;
 4. positive rather than punitive approaches to behavior management;
 5. family outreach; and
 6. a model of instruction that promotes personal growth and confidence based on where students are in their learning.

Opening Date: Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) is currently operational and serving students in Bozeman Public Schools.

Public Charter Term Length: Five years consistent with HB549

Grades to be served: 3-8

Minimum Enrollment Per Year: 40

Planned Enrollment Per Year: 60-100

Maximum Enrollment Per Year: BoCS is scalable with no hard cap on enrollment

For each year of the public charter term, indicate the number of students the public charter school plans to serve in each grade.

Yr	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
1				10-28	10-28	10-30	10-30	10-30	10-30					60-176
2				10-28	10-28	10-30	10-30	10-30	10-30					60-176
3				10-28	10-28	10-30	10-30	10-30	10-30					60-176
4				10-28	10-28	10-30	10-30	10-30	10-30					60-176
5				10-28	10-28	10-30	10-30	10-30	10-30					60-176

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

- 1. State the public charter school’s mission and vision and describe why this initiative is important to the community it will serve.**

BoCS Mission Statement: The BOCS will provide a model of instruction that is flexible and creative to ensure all students are met where they are in their learning and are supported as they advance in their learning. The BoCS aims to enrich each student with a sense of purpose, a belief in personal efficacy, and a passion for learning.

Although the Bozeman Charter School (BoCS) has built a separate and unique culture and identity, the program is closely tied to the core purpose of Bozeman Public Schools: *Bozeman Public Schools exist to provide an outstanding education that inspires and ensures high achievement so every student can succeed and make a difference in a rapidly changing world community.*

As an extension of the BSD7 Core Purpose, the purpose of the BCS is to create a student centered learning approach, providing the right experience for the right student at the right time. The BoCS provides an innovative, flexible approach as an option for students in grades 3-8 that is very different from the approach in our brick and mortar elementary and middle schools.

Core Beliefs:

1. That all students can learn and succeed;
2. That proficiency in rigorous standards is necessary for great success;
3. That learning is an active collaboration between learners, teachers, families, and community;
4. Learning, and demonstrations of learning, can take place at any time, anywhere, and in a variety of ways;
5. That learning is a lifelong process with intrinsic value and relevant to all life experiences;
6. That we have a responsibility to our community to be the best we can be;
7. That students learn best in a respectful, stable, inclusive, and flexible environment;
8. That any student who is in trouble or in crisis needs our help and support in continuing to work toward success; and
9. That the individual and group are responsible to provide community service for the betterment of all.

2. Identify the targeted student population and the community the public charter school proposes to serve.

The BoCS is available to all in-district and out-of-district students in grades 3-8. There isn't a "typical" BoCS student and students/families come to the BoCS for a variety of reasons, including:

- Competency-based approach
- Flexible schedule
- Online component for core instruction that reduces anxiety related to large in-person classroom settings
- Expeditionary learning in the community
- Small, student-tailored in-person experiences in the afternoon
- Community and culture

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. Recruitment and enrollment is handled via typical enrollment procedures for Bozeman Public Schools. The program has not experienced growth that could not be accommodated to date, hence there hasn't been a need for lottery procedures. The District will continue to operate "rounds" of enrollment and lottery procedures would be incorporated into those rounds if student

numbers were above capacity for the charter school. As mentioned above, the school is also scalable and can expand and contract based upon student numbers.

- 4. Describe the public charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in your school district. Include plans to formally assess student achievement on an annual basis.**

Flexibility, Expeditionary learning, and Proficiency/Competency-Based Learning are the key distinctions between the BoCS and the typical elementary and middle school experiences in Bozeman Public Schools. All students attend core instruction synchronously online, and a learning management system is used to organize and structure the learning progressions in core content areas.

The Bozeman Charter School is included in the accountability structures tied to the District's [Long Range Strategic Plan](#) (LRSP). This includes site-based goal setting and action plans tied to District goals, as well as board luncheon structures and transparency with the community via the [LRSP Annual Report](#).

- 5. Describe any variances to existing standards that the public charter school requires to enhance educational opportunities.**

The initial charter application for the Bozeman Charter school included variance requests for ARM 10.55.710 Assignment of School Counseling Staff, ARM 10.55.709 Library Media Services, and ARM 10.55.705 Administrative Personnel: Assignment of School Administrators. This application is seeking variances for assignment of counseling staff and librarian staff. The BoCS operates out of Irving Elementary School, and utilizes the existing administrative, library, and counseling FTE built-in at Irving. While the current enrollment in the BoCs is quite small, if the school enrollment were to grow the following specific variances would be requested:

ARM 10.55.710 ASSIGNMENT OF SCHOOL COUNSELING STAFF (1) A minimum equivalent of one full-time counselor for each 400 elementary (K-8) students shall be provided. The counselor/student ratio shall be prorated.

- A. The BoCS implements a comprehensive school counseling program designed to meet standards and is educationally sound by implementing the BSD7 Board adopted ASCA Mindsets and Behavior Standards. Core and supplemental materials aligned with the standards are used in the BoCS, similar to their use in other District schools. Assessment of the standards will include the use of the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), completed during the same benchmark assessment window as other District schools.
- B. Current enrollment in the BoCS allows the district to "employ or contract with a licensed and endorsed school counselor or Class 6 specialist." The District intends to utilize the existing counseling FTE at Irving Elementary School for that purpose. If enrollment in the BoCS were to rise above 126 students the District seeks to assign counseling staff at the

following prorated ratios:

- .2 FTE when enrollment is up to 159 students
- .4 FTE when enrollment is between 160-239 students
- .6 FTE when enrollment is between 240-319 students
- .8 FTE when enrollment is between 320-399 students
- 1.0 FTE when enrollment is 400 students.

ARM 10.55.709 LIBRARY MEDIA SERVICES (1) The school library shall be housed in a central location, and each school shall have a licensed and endorsed library media specialist.

- A. Core instruction in the BoCS on-line, however, the in-person components of the program are housed at Irving Elementary which has a fully staffed library. Access to these resources will be based on availability and the capacity to provide those resources to the number of students requiring them at any given time.
- B. As there cannot be a physical library in the remote school, the job requirements of a library media specialist would look different. The BoCS would seek a modification to this accreditation standard that would better reflect how to best utilize a library media specialist in this remote schooling environment in a way that is workable and will meet the 2021 Montana Content Standards for Library Media and Information Literacy in the given context and remains educationally sound in supporting the BoCS students.
- C. Current enrollment in the BoCS allows the district to “employ or contract with a licensed and endorsed media specialist.” The District intends to utilize the existing library FTE at Irving Elementary School for that purpose. If enrollment in the BoCS were to rise above 126 students the District seeks to assign a library media specialist at the following ratios:
 - .375 FTE when enrollment is between 126-250
 - .750 FTE when enrollment is between 251-500
 - 1.0 FTE when enrollment is between 501-750
 - 1.375 FTE when enrollment is between 751-1000

6. Describe the instructional design, including the type of learning environment, class size and structure, curriculum overview, and teaching methods.

The Bozeman Charter School uses Competency-based learning, which is an approach where learners move from one learning level to a higher one based on their demonstration of knowledge rather than time spent in a specific course. The instructional model is learner centric, outcome-based, and enlists differentiated learning at its core. Learning becomes the constant and time becomes the variable.

Remote learning via Google Meets is the vehicle for the core instruction delivered by "live" teachers. There are 18 students in the middle school class (grades 6-8) and 13 students in the elementary class (grades 3-5). Students are all on a remote lesson first thing in the morning as a grounding activity and then break out into smaller groups for instruction based on their

proficiency level. Math, language arts, social studies and science are scheduled throughout the week in approximately 45 minute sessions.

Afternoon in-person instruction is required for students that are not at least performing proficiently as to their grade level standards. Afternoon in-person instruction for those that are proficient is voluntary. Students that are not proficient receive intervention services from the intervention teacher in the afternoons.

Teachers use the district approved curriculum and supplement with technology resources that are also district approved.

Teachers use a variety of instructional methods (many that are technology based) to keep students engaged in the learning.

- 7. Describe plans for identifying and successfully serving students with disabilities, students who are English Language Learners, students who are academically challenged, and gifted students, including compliance with applicable laws and regulations.**

Working in conjunction with Irving Elementary School and the middle schools, BCS will provide all related educational services (i.e. special education, 504, ELL) to serve the needs of all students who may be interested in enrolling in BCS.

- 8. Describe student discipline policies, including those for special education students.**

The Bozeman Charter School is a program within Bozeman Public Schools at the elementary and middle school levels, and all district discipline policies and high school student/parent handbooks applicable to elementary and middle school school students are in place for the BCS.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

- 9. Describe the public charter school's organizational chart that clearly presents the proposed organizational structure, including lines of authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, related bodies such as advisory bodies or parent and teacher councils, and external organizations that will play a role in managing the public charter school.**

Upon successful designation as a public charter school via HB549 the Bozeman Charter School would serve as a school within a school on the campus of Irving Elementary School. The school would be added to the [District's organizational chart](#). The school would have administrative oversight by the Irving Elementary School principal. The Deputy Superintendent that oversees

Irving Elementary School would also oversee the BCS. The BSD7 Board of Trustees would have full authority over the charter school consistent with their authority over existing school sites within the District.

10. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the governing board, the proposed leadership management team, and other entities shown in the organizational chart.

The Bozeman Charter School would operate similarly to the other schools in the District with a guiding coalition of teacher leaders who work closely with building administration.

11. Provide a staffing chart for the public charter school's first year and a staffing plan for the term of the public charter school.

The BoCS launched in 2020-2021 with a core staff of 5 FTE: two elementary teachers, two middle school teachers, and one health enhancement teacher who also designed and facilitated expeditionary learning. In addition, the District allocated counselor, librarian, and special education FTE to cover those needs in the program. The District also allocated a 1.0 FTE principal that helped the design team put the program together, as well as supporting the program during the first year.

Since the initial launch FTE has been tied to student enrollment numbers in the program. The BoCS was also moved from the Willson (Central Office Building) to Irving Elementary (BSD7's smallest elementary school) to allow sharing of principal, counselor, special education, health enhancement, librarian, and music FTE. The BocS is currently staffed with two core teachers (2 FTE), one covering 3-5, and the other covering 6-8.

12. Detail the public charter school startup plan, identifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals.

The Bozeman Charter School is currently operational and has been serving students since 2021. The District is seeking formal designation as a charter school under HB549 and doesn't intend to have any lapse in service during this transition.

Describe the plans for recruiting and developing school leadership and staff.

Teachers within the BoCS operate as a professional learning community (PLC). PLC's are formally defined as: *A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators.* More broadly, professional development needs within the BoCS are considered within the District's

elementary and middle school professional development committees that builds and recommends the annual PIR schedule for each of those grade bands.

13. Describe the proposed leadership and teacher employment policies, including performance evaluation plans.

All staff within the BoCS are recruited, on-boarded, and evaluated consistent with the policies and procedures within Bozeman Public Schools. Building administration at Irving Elementary School completes the evaluations for the teaching faculty within the BoCS.

14. State the proposed governing bylaws.

As a charter school under the Bozeman Public Schools locally elected board of trustees all BSD7 policies and procedures are applicable to the BoCS.

15. Explain any partnerships or contractual relationships central to the operations and mission of the public charter school.

N/A

16. Provide the proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.

The Bozeman Charter School follows the district [calendar](#). Students who choose to participate in the BCS select from the following options:

<u>Pathway 1: Remote Only</u>	<u>Pathway 2: Remote + Expeditionary</u>	<u>Pathway 3: Remote + Expeditionary + In-Person</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">Characteristics to be successful</p> <p>Remote: Ability to work independently; willingly engages in the learning; generally does not need additional support beyond whole group instruction to master content; strong time management skills</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Characteristics to be successful</p> <p>Remote: Ability to work independently; willingly engages in the learning; generally does not need additional support beyond whole group instruction to master content; strong time management skills</p> <p>Expeditionary: Engage with content and peers during expeditionary learning trips</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Characteristics to be successful</p> <p>Remote: Ability to work independently; willingly engages in the learning; strong time management skills</p> <p>In-person: Engage with teacher and peers during instruction; willingness to ask questions and seek help when needed</p> <p>Expeditionary: Engage with content and peers during expeditionary learning trips</p>

The daily elementary schedule for the BocS is:

Elementary	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Remote lessons	8:20-10:40	8:20-10:40	8:20-10:40	8:20-10:40	8:20-10:40
One-on-one meets	10:40-11:10	10:40-11:10	10:40-11:10	10:40-11:10	10:40-11:10
Teacher Lunch and Prep/Travel	11:10-12:50	11:10-12:50	11:10-12:50	11:10-12:50	11:10-12:50
In-person instruction (students at home complete independent work)	12:50-1:45	12:50-1:45	Expeditionary Learning Trip	12:50-1:45	12:50-1:45
Recess	1:45-2:00	1:45-2:00		1:45-2:00	1:45-2:00
In-person instruction (students at home complete independent work)	2:00-2:20	2:00-2:20		2:00-2:20	2:00-2:20
Specials	2:20-3:10	2:20-3:10		2:20-3:10	2:20-3:10
Dismissal	3:15	3:15		3:15	3:15
			**A few Wednesdays trips are all day trips		

The daily middle school schedule for the BoCS is:

Middle	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Remote lessons	8:20-10:40	8:20-10:40	8:20-10:40	8:20-10:40	8:20-10:40
One-on-one meets	10:40-11:10	10:40-11:10	10:40-11:10	10:40-11:10	10:40-11:10
Teacher Lunch and	11:10-12:50	11:10-12:50	11:10-12:50	11:10-12:50	11:10-12:50

Prep/Travel					
In-person instruction (students at home complete independent work)	12:50-2:20	12:50-2:20	Expeditionary Learning Trips	12:50-2:20	12:50-2:20
HE	2:20-3:10	2:20-3:10		2:20-3:10	2:20-3:10
Dismissal	3:15	3:15		3:15	3:15
			**A few Wednesdays trips are all day trips		

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

18. Describe plans for providing transportation, food service, and all other significant operational or ancillary services.

Students within the BoCS have access to food services consistent with all students in the district. Bozeman Charter School parents are required to transport their students to school for in person learning and transport to and from most of our expeditionary learning trips.

19. Describe cocurricular and extracurricular programs and how the programs will be funded and delivered.

Bozeman Charter School students participate in expeditionary learning trips and activities each week. These activities are within the school day and are an integral part of the school program. Students interact with their environment (both inside and outside) by visiting locations in the Gallatin Valley. Teachers integrate the experiences from the trip into their instruction and student learning. These trips are funded by a combination of school site funds and the BoCS parent advisory council.

20. Describe the proposed financial plan and policies, including financial controls and audit requirements.

All BSD7 financial policies, controls, and audit requirements for the Bozeman Elementary District will be applicable to the BoCS.

21. Describe the insurance coverage that will be obtained.

The BoCS is currently covered via the District's insurance policy. No changes to that policy are anticipated.

22. Describe the startup and five-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions.

The BoCS will exist under the auspices of the Bozeman School District and be afforded all of the financial benefits and structures as other District programs. Personnel and operating costs will be financed primarily through the District's General Fund, with supplemental support provided through the Transportation, Retirement, and Interlocal Agreement Funds, among others. Certified staff will be paid in accordance with the District's collective bargaining agreement, so those costs are known and capped. Budgets for supplies and equipment will be managed by the building principal in accordance with District policy and state law. Current and anticipated annual budget:

	General Fund	Retirement Fund	Other Funds	Total
<u>Uses of Funds:</u>				
Salaries & Benefits	\$140,000	\$28,000	-	\$168,000
Other Costs	126,000	-	-	126,000
Total Uses	\$266,000	\$28,000		\$294,000
<u>Sources of Funds:</u>				
General Fund	\$266,000	-	-	\$266,000
Retirement Fund	-	28,000	-	28,000
Other	-	-	-	-
Total Sources	\$266,000	\$28,000	-	\$294,000

Federal grant support will also be available, as appropriate for the terms of the grant.

The District has the highest bond rating of any public school district in the state and a decades-long streak of clean audits. Both of these accomplishments speak to the District's effective internal controls, overall financial strength, and management aptitude.

23. Describe the startup and first year cash flow projections with clearly stated assumptions.

Similar to the budget, cash flow will be handled as with other General Fund programs. General Fund reserves are currently at the legally-allowed maximums, providing ample time for state base aid and local tax funding associated with the program to become available. Although the District does not anticipate it to be necessary, we are also able to make interfund loans to the General Fund as a last resort.

24. Describe anticipated fundraising contributions and evidence, if applicable.

The BoCS is currently operational and doesn't require fundraising revenue for operations. The district would receive any donations or community philanthropy directed at the BoCS consistent with board policy and procedures.

25. Describe the facilities plan, including backup or contingency plans.

The BoCS operates in two classrooms on the Irving Elementary School site. The BoCS also utilizes common space, including the gym/cafeteria, library, and playground.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEED

26. Describe the specific evidence of significant community support.

The Bozeman Charter School has been a successful model in Bozeman Public Schools since 2021. The BoCS Parent Advisory Council (PAC) provides additional funding to ensure that our program can continue with weekly expeditionary learning trips. The BoCS PAC also plans and funds the annual holiday program and various other performances and activities for BoCS students.

Additionally, the periodic charter program renewal process allows for formal community engagement and input opportunities at publicly noticed meetings.

27. Describe the opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.

There are many opportunities for parent involvement (chaperones on trips, assisting with in person learning, presenting to BoCS students using their unique talents to enrich their learning, and assisting with fundraising). The BoCS has a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) similar to all in-person BSD7 schools. Bozeman Charter School parents are required to transport their students to school for in person learning and transport to and from most of our expeditionary learning trips.