Montana Early Literacy Advisory Council

Recommendations to the Montana Board of Public Education

November 15-17, 2023

Drafted by McCall Flynn and Caitlin Jensen

Introduction and Summary

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

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

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

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

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McCall Flynn, Executive Director of the Montana Board of Public Education & Caitlin Jensen, Executive Director of Zero to Five Montana, facilitated the Council meetings and discussions. The Council followed the scope of work, as determined by the Board of Public Education:

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

Background

Access to early childhood education is varied across the state, and Montana is currently one of four states without a public preschool option (NIEER, 2022). In addition to offering Head Start preschool programming in 37 counties, Montana has piloted two initiatives to expand preschool opportunities: the federally funded Montana Preschool Development (MPDG) grant (2017 – 2019) which built early education capacity in 22 communities (10 school districts) and the Montana STARS Preschool program (2017) which supported expansion of 18 early childhood programs (10 school districts). An emphasis on early childhood workforce development was included in the MPDG grant to enhance P3 teacher education through financial assistance at Salish Kootenai College, University of Montana, UM Western, and Montana State University.

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

The following outline early childhood education programs and educator workforce supports in Montana, intended to further define the existing system:
- ❖ **Head Start** is a federally funded, comprehensive program with early education, health, and family support components. This federal-to-local program requires a 20% community funding match. There are currently 6 Tribal Head Start grantees and 13 community-based grantees across Montana (Office of Head Start, 2021). Categorical eligibility is utilized to support enrollment based on family income, public service enrollment including TAN-F and SNAP, disability, military status, foster care, and families experiencing homelessness (Head Start Program Performance Standards, 2018). In 2022, Head Start programs served 1,337 3-year-olds, 1,466 4-year-olds, and 26 children ages 5 and up across Montana.
- ❖ **Special Education Preschool** is partially federally funded in Montana and is available to support young children with developmental delays or disabilities. Providing special

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

❖ **Private Early Care and Education** (ECE) is how most Montana families access school readiness support. Most of Montana is considered a childcare desert – only 43% of the estimated demand for early care and education is met by the current capacity available, and 68,000 Montana families, or 8% of the state's labor force, are currently not fully participating in the labor force due to inadequate access to quality early care and education (Montana Department of Labor and Industry, 2021). Increased access to quality early care and education services would result in a positive impact to Montana's local and state economy.

❖ **The Early Childhood Education Workforce** includes providers and educators who develop and deliver quality, age-appropriate curriculum to help children enter school ready to learn. The MPGD created a professional development pathway for early care and education professionals to obtain a Preschool-through 3rd grade endorsement, commonly referred to as the P3 endorsement. Through a scholarship program funded by the grant, 1,273 early care and education providers had a verified early childhood or related degree and/or a P-3 endorsement in 2022 (Montana Early Childhood Project, 2022). P3 teacher and educator preparation continues to be a priority among Montana's Institutions of Higher Education, despite a reduction in funding available to support scholarships. The Montana Office of Public Instruction reported the following data regarding number of P3 endorsed teachers working in Montana Public Schools:

Year	# of P3 endorsed teachers employed in Montana public school districts
2023	166
2022	Data not available
2021	187
2020	119
2019	76

❖ **Statewide Early Education Collaboratives** support cross-sector partnership and increase coordination among sectors. Established efforts currently exist to elevate the early care and education workforce and foster community and state policy partnerships. These include the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium, the Montana Early Learning Alliance, the UM Institute for Early Childhood Education, and the Tribal Colleges and Universities Head Start Partnership Program.

❖ **Exceptional Circumstances** have existed for over 40 years (1979), and school districts have had the authority to enroll children with exceptional circumstances in an early kindergarten program. The law allows a school board to gain ANB funding for children under the age of 5 who are enrolled in kindergarten when there are exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the board of trustees, that merit waiving the lower age limit for ANB. The practice of enrolling and admitting children below the age of 5 is not

3

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unprecedented. There are districts who have been successfully doing so for years and there are a growing number of children under the age of 5 being served under exceptional circumstances and claimed for ANB by Montana's public schools:

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

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

Scope of Work

Understanding 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

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

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

❖ increase the number of children who are reading proficient at the end of 3rd grade and in doing so, help children develop their full educational potential pursuant to Article X, section 1(1), of the Montana constitution; and

❖ foster a strong economic return for the state on early literacy investment through enhancing Montana's skilled workforce and decreasing future reliance on social programs and the criminal justice system.

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

In 20-7-1601, MCA, the following definitions apply:

❖ "**Proficiency**" means a measure of competence that is demonstrated through application in a performance assessment.

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

In ARM 10.55.602, the following definitions apply:

❖ "**Personalized learning**" means to: develop individualized pathways for career and postsecondary educational opportunities that honor individual interests, passions, strengths, needs, and culture; support the student through the development of

4

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relationships among teachers, family, peers, the business community, postsecondary education officials, public entities, and other community stakeholders; embed community-based, experiential, online, and work-based learning opportunities; and foster a learning environment that incorporates both face-to-face and virtual connections.

- ❖ "**Proficiency-based learning**" means systems of instruction, assessment, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills as outlined in the state content standards.
- ❖ "**Proficient**" means that a student demonstrated a level of knowledge and skills that are expected to be learned signaling that a student is well prepared to progress on the learning continuum aligned to the content standards, learning progressions, and necessary readiness skills.

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

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

The Board of Public Education shall determine an evaluation methodology to determine, based on a child's age or grade level, whether the child is above, at, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency on completion of 3rd grade. The evaluation must be:
- ❖ developmentally appropriate;
- ❖ research-based;
- ❖ cost-effective; and
- ❖ if possible, aligned with formative assessments that inform instruction in the classroom-based program and the jumpstart program.

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

In reviewing the legislation, the Council really focused on highlighting a specific set of literacy skills that children and students would be assessed on in order to be eligible for the early literacy targeted intervention programs. (Appendix A) Per legislation, these assessments (or screeners) will happen each April, May, or June prior to the schoolyear. To better understand the alignment between the literacy skills and in which school year they take place, the Council developed the Methodology Matrix. (Appendix C)

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Survey Results
The Council released a survey to request information about current early literacy services to 4-year-olds, as well as data on screening tools school districts are currently using. HB 352 specifies the evaluation methodology, if possible, be aligned with formative assessments that inform instruction in the classroom-based program and the jumpstart program.

The survey was sent to school district leaders across the state and received 42 responses, representing 36 school districts (both small and large districts, including Indian country) and 29 towns. An additional 8 Head Start programs, partnering with school districts, participated in the survey.

Nine commonly used assessments, identified through the survey, were incorporated into the screening tool crosswalk, providing context to the Council about the types of screening tools currently being used in Montana.

In addition to data collected about commonly used screening assessments, the survey also asked questions about current services to 4-year-olds, names of programs, previous participation in the Montana Preschool Development Grant or the STARS Preschool program, as well as information about how early childhood assessments are administered. Some respondents also included information about the cost of the assessment, as well as how data is commonly used to inform ongoing instruction.

Shared Definitions
The Council reviewed the following definitions to determine which type of screening tools they would include on the recommended list of "approved screening tools":

"Traditional Screening" means a brief assessment procedure designed to identify children who may need more intensive diagnosis or evaluation from local early intervention, early childhood special education, health, mental health, or other related service providers.
   ❖ *Answers the question*: Does this child need further evaluation?
   ❖ *Screening Tool Examples*: The Ages and Stages Questionnaires, The Denver-II, DIAL-3, Early Screening Inventory, Revised Developmental Screening Inventory, Parent's Evaluation of Developmental Status.

"Universal Screening" means the process of gathering academic and social-emotional behavior data. The universal screener is a brief and easy to administer procedure designed to identify children who should receive more intensive intervention or support in particular content areas. Of note, many universal screeners also serve the dual purpose of program planning and/or progress monitoring.
   ❖ *Answers the question(s)*: Does this child need additional instruction? Is this child responding to intervention?
   ❖ *Screening Tool Examples*: Individual Growth and Development Indicators, Preschool Early Literacy Indicators, Acadience Reading, STAR Early Literacy, FastBridge

In reviewing these definitions, the Council determined that a universal screening process would more accurately assess children to better understand the level of intervention and instruction

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needed to reach proficiency. The Council agreed to focus on the universal screening tools when creating the list of approved screening tools. (Appendix B) The Council created the Screening Tool crosswalk to better align the universal screening tools that our school districts are already using with the literacy skills that will be assessed to determine eligibility as part of the evaluation methodology. (Appendix D)

Jumpstart Program
For an eligible child who is 5 years of age or older on or before September 10 of the year in which the child is to participate in the program and who has not yet completed 3rd grade, the trustees may offer a jumpstart program.
The jumpstart program must:
   ❖ take place during the time between the end of one school calendar year and the start of the next school calendar year, as determined by the trustees, preceding a child's entry into kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, or 3rd grade;
   ❖ be at least 4 weeks in duration and provide at least 120 instructional hours;
   ❖ be aligned to a framework determined by the Board of Public Education; and
   ❖ be designed in a manner to increase the likelihood of a child being evaluated at the end of the ensuing school year to be at or above a trajectory leading to reading proficiency at the end of 3rd grade.

In reviewing the legislation, the Council really focused on creating a jumpstart program framework that aligns with the evaluation methodology and adheres to the requirements in the Montana Early Childhood Education Standards and the Montana Content Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. (Appendix A)

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

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

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

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

7

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

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

Given these new definitions, the Council reviewed Title 10, Chapter 63 – Early Childhood Education Standards to ensure the current language pertaining to public preschool programs continues to be reliable and accurate, while providing additional language to differentiate between public preschool programs and early literacy targeted intervention programs, based on the new legislation, when appropriate. (Appendix E) Recommended rule revisions will be presented to the Board of Public Education at their January meeting and included in this report.

Conclusion

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

The Montana Early Literacy Advisory Council would like to thank the Board of Public Education for the opportunity to participate in this work. The information and recommendations provided in this document are well researched and have proven to be highly successful in other states. By approving these recommendations, we are confident that more students in Montana will receive early literacy targeted interventions, which will in turn support their pathway to 3rd grade proficiency.

Appendices

A.   Draft Rule – Evaluation Methodology and Jumpstart Framework

B.   List of Approved Evaluation Methodology Screening Tools

C.   Methodology Matrix

D.   Screening Tool Crosswalk

E.   Draft Rule – Early Childhood Education Standards

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APPENDIX A

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BEFORE THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA
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In the matter of the adoption of New Rule I and New Rule II pertaining to the early literacy targeted intervention programs	) NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON) PROPOSED ADOPTION)))

TO: All Concerned Persons

1. On January 4, 2024, at 10:00AM the Board of Public Education (Board) will hold a public hearing in Room 152 of the Montana State Capitol in Helena, Montana to consider the proposed adoption of the above-stated rules.

2. The Board will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities who wish to participate in this rulemaking process or need an alternative accessible format of this notice. If you require an accommodation, contact the Board no later than 5:00PM on December 22, 2023, to advise us of the nature of the accommodation that you need. Please contact McCall Flynn, Executive Director, 46 N. Last Chance Gulch, Suite 2B, P.O. Box 200601, Helena, Montana, 59620-0601; telephone (406) 444-0300; or e-mail mflynn@mt.gov.

3. The rules as proposed to be adopted provides as follows:

<u>NEW RULE I EVALUATION METHODOLOGY FOR EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTIONS</u>
(1) The local board of trustees shall adopt and ensure use of an evaluation methodology to identify, enroll, and admit children to early literacy targeted interventions. The evaluation methodology used must be overseen by and include application of professional judgment of qualified employees. A child may not be evaluated for the purposes of these interventions unless requested by the child's parent or guardian. The district must maintain evidence of the request. The evaluation methodology may be administered in April, May, or June, and must assess at least one of the following literacy skills:
    (a) For four-year-olds:
        i.   Oral Language;
        ii.   Phonological Awareness;
        iii. Alphabet Knowledge;
    (b) Prior to Kindergarten:
        i.   Oral Language
        ii.   Phonological Awareness;
        iii. Alphabet Knowledge;
    (c) Prior to First grade:
        i.   Phoneme Awareness;
        ii.   Listening Comprehension;
        iii. Developmental Spelling;

MAR Notice No. 10-54-292

    iv. Vocabulary (expressive or receptive);
    v. Word Reading (nonsense or real);
    vi. Reading Composite;
   (d) Prior to Second grade:
    i. Listening Comprehension;
    ii. Developmental Spelling;
    iii. Vocabulary (expressive or receptive);
    iv. Word Reading (nonsense or real);
    v. Connected Text Reading Fluency;
    vi. Connected Text Accuracy;
    vii. Reading Composite;
   (e) Prior to Third grade:
    i. Developmental Spelling;
    ii. Vocabulary (expressive or receptive);
    iii. Word Reading (nonsense or real);
    iv. Connected Text Reading Fluency;
    v. Connected Text Accuracy;
    vi. Reading Comprehension;
    vii. Reading Composite;

   (2) The list of approved evaluation methodology screening tools must be reviewed in odd years through a process of review complying with the provisions of Title 2, Chapter 3, MCA, to ensure continuous adherence to developmentally appropriate and research-based screening tool requirements. Any changes of the list must be published and made publicly available by the Board of Public Education no later than 30 days after adoption of any changes. The removal of an evaluation methodology screening tool shall not be effective until July 1 following such removal.

   (3) A local board of trustees adopting and using one of the approved evaluation methodology screening tools shall be construed to have complied with this rule.

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

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

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-18XX, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-18XX, MCA

   NEW RULE II JUMPSTART PROGRAM FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTION
   (1) The local board of trustees may offer a jumpstart program to support early literacy targeted intervention based on evaluation methodology identified in New Rule I as aligned to the Montana Early Childhood Education Standards and the Montana Content Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy.

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

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

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-18XX, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-18XX, MCA

REASON: The Board proposes to adopt New Rule I and New Rule II to comply with HB 352 (2023). The Early Literacy Advisory Council, created by the Board of Public Education, recommended the proposed evaluation methodology and jumpstart program framework to address the purposes of the legislation to provide parents with voluntary early literacy interventions for their children, increase the number of children who are reading proficient at the end of 3rd grade, and foster a strong economic return for the state on early literacy investments. New Rule I will be codified as ARM 10.54.901 and New Rule II will be codified as ARM 10.54.902.

4. Concerned persons may submit their data, views, or arguments concerning the proposed action in writing to: McCall Flynn, Executive Director, Board of Public Education, 46 N. Last Chance Gulch, Suite 2B, P.O. Box 200601, Helena, Montana, 59620; telephone (406) 444-0300; or e-mail mflynn@mt.gov, and must be received no later than 5:00PM, January 7, 2024.

5. McCall Flynn, Executive Director, Board of Public Education has been designated to preside over and conduct this hearing.

6. The Board maintains a list of interested persons who wish to receive notices of rulemaking actions proposed by this agency. Persons who wish to have their name added to the list shall make a written request that includes the name, e-mail, and mailing address of the person to receive notices and specifies for which program the person wishes to receive notices. Notices will be sent by e-mail unless a mailing preference is noted in the request. Such written request may be mailed or delivered to the contact person in 4 above or may be made by completing a request form at any rules hearing held by the agency.

7. An electronic copy of this proposal notice is available through the Secretary of State's web site at http://sos.mt.gov/ARM/Register. The Secretary of State strives to make the electronic copy of the notice conform to the official version of the notice, as printed in the Montana Administrative Register, but advises all concerned persons that in the event of a discrepancy between the official printed text of the notice and the electronic version of the notice, only the official printed text

will be considered. In addition, although the Secretary of State works to keep its web site accessible at all times, concerned persons should be aware that the web site may be unavailable during some periods, due to system maintenance or technical problems.

       8. The bill sponsor contact requirements of 2-4-302, MCA, apply and have been fulfilled. The primary bill sponsor was contacted by email on November 7, 2023.
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       9. With regard to the requirements of 2-4-111, MCA, the Board has determined that amendment of the above-referenced rule will not significantly and directly impact small businesses.

/s/ McCall Flynn   /s/ Tim Tharp
McCall Flynn   Tim Tharp
Executive Director   Chair
Board of Public Education   Board of Public Education

Certified to the Secretary of State XX.

APPENDIX B

Board of Public Education
List of Approved Evaluation Methodology Screening Tools

According to ARM 10.54.901, the list of approved evaluation methodology screening tools must be reviewed by the Board of Public Education in odd years through a process of review complying with the provisions of Title 2, Chapter 3, MCA, to ensure continuous adherence to developmentally appropriate and research-based screening tool requirements.

Any changes of the list shall be published and made publicly available by the Board of Public Education no later than 30 days after adoption of any changes. The removal of an evaluation methodology screening tool shall not be effective until July 1 following such removal.

Adopted: TBD 2024
Revised: TBD

(1) For four-year-olds and prior to Kindergarten:
    (a) Acadience Reading PreK (PELI -- Preschool Early Literacy Indicators)
        Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge
    (b) Assessment of Story Comprehension (ASC)
        Screens for: Oral Language
    (c) Early Bird
        Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge
    (d) Get Ready To Read! (Revised)
        Screens for: Oral Language, Alphabet Knowledge
    (e) Language Screen (OxEd) and Reading Screen
        Screens for: Oral Language
    (f) myIGDIs
        Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge
    (g) Quick Interactive Language Screener (QUILS)
        Screens for: Oral language
    (h) Star Early Literacy
        Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge
    (i) Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL)
        Screens for: Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Alphabet Knowledge

(2) For prior to first grade, second grade, third grade:
    (a) Acadience Reading (formerly DIBELS NEXT)
        Screens for: Phoneme Awareness, Developmental Spelling, Word Reading (nonsense or real), Connected Text Reading Fluency, Connected Text Accuracy, Reading Comprehension, Reading Composite

(b) aimswebPlus

Screens for: Phoneme Awareness, Developmental Spelling, Word Reading (nonsense or real), Connected Text Reading Fluency, Connected Text Accuracy, Reading Comprehension, Reading Composite

(c) DIBELS 8th

Screens for: Phoneme Awareness, Word Reading (nonsense or real), Connected Text Reading Fluency, Connected Text Accuracy, Reading Comprehension, Reading Composite

(d) Early Bird

Screens for: Phoneme Awareness, Listening Comprehension, Vocabulary (expressive or receptive), Word Reading (nonsense or real), Connected Text Reading Fluency, Connected Text Accuracy, Reading Composite

(e) easyCBM

Screens for: Phoneme Awareness, Vocabulary (expressive or receptive), Word Reading (nonsense or real), Connected Text Reading Fluency, Connected Text Accuracy, Reading Comprehension, Reading Composite

(f) FastBridge

Screens for: Phoneme Awareness, Developmental Spelling, Vocabulary (expressive or receptive), Connected Text Reading Fluency, Connected Text Accuracy, Reading Comprehension, Reading Composite

(g) Language Screen (OxEd) and Reading Screen

Screens for: Phoneme Awareness, Listening Comprehension, Vocabulary (expressive or receptive), Word Reading (nonsense or real), Reading Composite

APPENDIX C

4-year-old - Third Grade Literacy Skills	Assessments Prior to Grade Level				
	4-year-old	K	1st	2nd	3rd
Oral Language	X	X			
Phonological Awareness	X	X			
Alphabet Knowledge	X	X			
Phoneme Awareness			X		
Listening Comprehension			X	X	
Developmental Spelling			X	X	X
Vocabulary (expressive or receptive)			X	X	X
Word Reading (nonsense or real)			X	X	X
Connected Text Reading Fluency				X	X
Connected Text Accuracy				X	X
Reading Comprehension					X
Reading Composite Score			X	X	X

APPENDIX D

Evaluation Methodology for Early Literacy Targeted Intervention

Screening Tools for 4-Year-Olds and Prior and Kindergarten	Age Appropriate Use & Purpose of Tool	Skill Focus	Skills Assessed for 4-Year-Olds & Prior to K		
			Oral Language	Phonological Awareness	Alphabet Knowledge
Universal Screeners ("X" indicates skill assessed by tool)					
Acadience Reading PreK (PELI - Preschool Early Literacy Indicators)	Tool appropriate for PreK. Storybook - embedded assessment of essential pre-literacy and oral language skills needed for kindergarten. The assessment is designed to identify children who are experiencing difficulties acquiring these skills with intent to provide the instructional support needed to improve future reading outcomes (alphabet, vocabulary, oral language, comprehension, phonological awareness).	Early literacy skills	X	X	X
Assessment of Story Comprehension (ASC)	Tool appropriate for PreK. Fast, easy way to measure the story comprehension of children ages 3–5, identify children who may need language intervention, monitor progress, and determine when comprehension has meaningfully improved.	Early literacy skils	X		
Early Bird	Tool appropriate for PreK to grade 3. Comprehensive early literacy screener that is aligned with the National Reading Panel and the Science of Reading. It is a game-based screener that can be administered as early as age four.	Early literacy skills	X	X	X
Get Ready To Read! (Revised)	Tool appropriate for PreK. Specifically developed for preschoolers. Get Ready to Read! (Revised) offers a brief, economical screening tool to help evaluate a child's readiness for learning how to read and write.	Early literacy skills	X		X
Language Screen (OxEd) and Reading Screen	Tool appropriate for PreK to 3rd grade. Track individual and whole class progress and identify those requiring additional language support or intervention with a fast, fun, and intuitive app for teachers and teaching assistants.	Oral language and early literacy	X		
myIGDIs	Tool appropriate for PreK. MyIGDIs helps you quickly and accurately assess early numeracy, early literacy, and/or social skill development so you can intervene early and provide all learners with targeted support for success.	Early literacy, early numeracy, and social skills	X	X	X
Quick Interactive Language Screener (QUILS)	Tool appropriate for age 3 to age 6. Evaluate whether children are making language progress appropriate for their age group.	Oral language	X		
Star Early Literacy	Tool appropriate for PreK to 3rd grade. Quickly measures Pre-K–3 students' early literacy and early numeracy skills with a computer-adaptive assessment designed just for young learners.	Early literacy and early numeracy	X	X	X
Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL)	Tool appropriate for age 3 to 5 years 11 months. Children entering kindergarten or first grade are expected to have a certain level of vocabulary, phonological awareness, and print knowledge to be successful in school. The TOPEL can identify preschoolers who are at risk for literacy problems, allowing early intervention. It is used by early childhood educators, special educators, psychologists, diagnosticians, and other professionals to document a child's print, oral vocabulary, and phonological awareness level; to document progress; and to plan intervention.	Early literacy	X	X	X

						Skills Assessed Prior to First, Second, and Third Grade Age 5+ (K-3rd Grade) Only							
Screening Tools for Prior to First, Second, and Third Grade	**Age Appropriate Use & Purpose of Tool**	**Skill Focus**				**Phoneme Awareness**	**Listening Comprehension**	**Developmental Spelling**	**Vocabulary (expressive or receptive)**	**Word Reading (nonsense or real)**	**Connected Text Reading Fluency**	**Connected Text Accuracy**	**Reading Comprehension**	**Reading Composite**
Universal Screeners ("X" indicates skill assessed by tool)														
Acadience Reading (formerly DIBELS NEXT)	Tool appropriate for K to 3rd grade. Used to determine how students are performing on important reading skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension).	Literacy and math				X		X		X	X	X	X	X
aimswebPlus	Tool appropriate for K to 3rd grade. aimswebPlus offers nationally-normed, skills-based benchmark assessments and progress monitoring integrated into one application across reading and math domains.	Literacy, math, behavioral, & social-emotional learning				X		X		X	X	X	X	X
DIBELS 8th	Tool appropriate for K to 3rd grade. DIBELS ® (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of literacy skills. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures that can be used to regularly detect risk and monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills in kindergarten through eighth grade.	Literacy				X				X	X	X	X	X
Early Bird	Tool appropriate for PreK to 3rd grade. Comprehensive early literacy screener that is aligned with the National Reading Panel and the Science of Reading. It is a game-based screener that can be administered as early as age four.	Literacy				X	X		X	X	X	X		X
easyCBM	Tool appropriate for K to 3rd grade. The easyCBM system is designed for benchmark assessments to be given at a students' actual grade level (progress monitoring measures can be used off grade level) for grades K-8th grade. The easyCBM program is researched/developed for testing in fall, winter, and spring with summer being the natural academic break, and grade advancement of students.	Literacy and math				X		X		X	X	X	X	X
FastBridge	Tool appropriate for K to 3rd grade. FastBridge combines Computer-Adaptive Tests (CAT) and Curriculum-Based Measures (CBM) for universal screening and progress monitoring while delivering psychometrically valid data.	Literacy, math, social emotional/behavioral				X		X	X		X	X	X	X
Language Screen (OxEd) and Reading Screen	Tool appropriate for PreK to 7th grade. ReadingScreen | OxEd & Assessment, assesses children's single word recognition and decoding ability by testing a series of words and nonwords which increase in difficulty as the test progresses. It takes less than 10 minutes to complete (there are discontinuation rules in place so depending on the reading level of the child, the test can be as short as 2-3 minutes).	Language, literacy and math				X	X		X	X				X

APPENDIX E

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

In the matter of the amendment of 10.63.101, 10.63.102, 10.63.103, 10.63.104, 10.63.107, 10.63.109, 10.63.110, 10.63.111, 10.63.112, 10.63.113, 10.63.114, 10.63.115, and repeal of 10.63.108 pertaining to early childhood education standards	) NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON) PROPOSED AMENDMENT AND) REPEAL)

TO: All Concerned Persons

1. On March 5, 2024, at 9:30 a.m., the Board of Public Education (board) will hold a public hearing in Room 152 of the Montana State Capitol in Helena, Montana, to consider the proposed adoption of the above-stated rules.

2. The board will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities who wish to participate in this rulemaking process or need an alternative accessible format of this notice. If you require an accommodation, contact the board no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 23, 2024, to advise us of the nature of the accommodation that you need. Please contact McCall Flynn, Executive Director, 46 N. Last Chance Gulch, Suite 2B, P.O. Box 200601, Helena, Montana, 59620-0601; telephone (406) 444-0300; or e-mail bpe@mt.gov.

3. The rules proposed to be amended provide as follows, new matter underlined, deleted matter interlined:

10.63.101 APPLICATION AND PROCEDURES (1) The early childhood education standards are focused on developmentally appropriate supports and strategies to enhance learning outcomes for a child between the ages of 3 and 5 for preschool programs and between the ages 4 and 5 for early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten. Use of these standards for public preschool are subject to the funding limits of sections 20-9-311(7)(a), and 20-7-117(2), MCA. Use of these standards for early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten are subject to the provisions of title 20, chapter 7, part 18, MCA.

(1)(2) The trustees of a school district, pursuant to Title 20, Chapter 6, may establish a public preschool early childhood education program to meet the unique developmental needs for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years for preschool programs and between the ages of 4 and 5 for early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten. When preschool early childhood education programs are established they must be an integral part of the public school and must be governed according to the following accreditation standards for the preschool early childhood education standards of early learning content and accreditation in coordination with the standards outlined for schools within ARM Title

MAR Notice No. 10-63-270

10, chapter 55, excluding
10.55.601, 10.55.602, 10.55.603, 10.55.704, 10.55.705, 10.55.709, 10.55.710, 10.55.712, 10.55.715, and ARM Title 10, chapter 55, subchapters 10 through 21. For the purposes of the accreditation process detailed in ARM 10.55.606, preschool early childhood education programs will be assessed on the program's assurance standards only.

(2)(3) ~~Preschool~~ Early childhood education programs shall meet this chapter's curriculum, instruction, and program delivery standards, supporting children's development of the knowledge and skills outlined in the content standards in ~~subchapter 3~~ ARM 10.63.110, which describe the expectations for what young children should know, understand, and be able to do across the four core developmental domains of learning upon entrance to kindergarten.

(3)(4) Montana's ~~preschool~~ early childhood education standards shall be reviewed and revised on a ~~five-year cycle beginning July 1, 2017~~ recurring schedule with input from representatives of accredited schools.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.102 DEFINITIONS (1) For the purposes of this chapter, the following terms apply:

(a) "Accreditation" means certification by the Board of Public Education that a school meets the adopted standards of the Board of Public Education for a specified school year.

(b) "Assessment" means the gathering, organizing, and evaluation of information about student learning in order to monitor and measure student learning, the effectiveness of the instructional program, and to inform local policies and decisions.

(c) "Developmental domain" means the broad, interrelated categories or dimensions of early childhood development reflective of ~~preschool~~ early childhood education children's learning and growth. The four core domains include ~~emotional/~~social and emotional, physical, ~~communication~~ language, and cognitive.

(d) "Early childhood curriculum" means an articulated educational plan for young children, which is grounded in research-based understandings of child development and developmentally appropriate practices. Curriculum guides the teaching process from identifying what to teach, including early content standards in each of the four developmental domains and how to teach, including developing learning experiences based upon individual and group outcomes, and assessing what was learned then using this data to inform future planning and teaching. For early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten, the curriculum must embrace the four developmental domains while focusing on the subject of literacy with a goal of establishing a trajectory leading to reading proficiency at the end of 3rd grade.

(e) "Learning center" means a self-contained area of the classroom featuring a wide variety of hands-on materials that children can choose and use independently which are organized around a curriculum area (science, math, art, music, dramatic play, literacy) or a specific kind of play material (blocks, sensory, manipulative).

(f) "Paraprofessional, ~~assistant teacher, or teacher aide~~" means an adult with the qualifications detailed in ARM ~~10.63.115~~ 10.63.105 who works under the direct supervision of a teacher and who may work independently in a teacher's absence, but for the majority of the time works directly with the teacher in the same space with the same group of students.

(g) "Teacher" means a licensed individual as defined in ARM 10.55.602, with primary responsibility for a group or class of ~~preschool~~ early childhood education students.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.103 LEADERSHIP (1) The program leadership shall effectively implement policies, procedures, and systems that support stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so all students, families, and staff have high-quality experiences.

(2) Professional development for ~~preschool~~ early childhood education educators as required by ARM 10.55.714 should be tailored to early childhood development and learning.

(3) Professional development completed by elementary (K-8) educators providing early literacy targeted interventions should be tailored to such interventions. The elementary (K-8) educators providing early literacy targeted interventions, the employing districts, and accredited educator preparation providers, pursuant to ARM 10.58.102, are encouraged to collaborate to develop professional development options that support attainment of qualifications leading to an early childhood education (P-3) endorsement.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.104 TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS FOR PUBLIC PRESCHOOL AND EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTIONS
(1) Teachers shall be assigned at the levels for which they are licensed and endorsed in accordance with state statutes and Board of Public Education rules.

(2)(a) Teachers with an ~~Early Childhood Education Special Permissive Competency~~ early childhood (P-3) endorsement shall be considered to be appropriately licensed, endorsed, and assigned to teach in an accredited preschool program ~~until July 1, 2018, at which time those teachers will need to be appropriately licensed and endorsed pursuant to ARM Title 10, chapter 57~~.

(b) While teachers with an early childhood (P-3) endorsement are encouraged, teachers with either an early childhood (P-3) endorsement or an elementary (K-8) endorsement shall be considered to be appropriately licensed, endorsed, and assigned to teach early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten. Teachers with an elementary (K-8) endorsement who are teaching early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten are encouraged to pursue professional development as outlined in 10.63.103 to ensure delivery of high-quality early literacy targeted interventions.

MAR Notice No. 10-63-270

(3) All other teachers or individuals with background, training, or experience in early childhood that are interested in teaching in a public school preschool program may apply for a Class 5 provisional license pursuant to ARM 10.57.424, if they do not have the proper endorsement.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.107 CLASS SIZE (1) There must be one appropriately licensed and endorsed teacher for ten students, with an early childhood paraprofessional for any additional students over ten, for up to no more than 18 total students in a classroom with two adults. The school district must assign qualified human resources that comply with all fingerprint and background check requirements when exceeding maximum class sizes at a rate of 1 ½ hours per day, per student overload. An overload of five students per classroom is considered excessive.
(2) Class size of 18 preschool early childhood education children is the maximum number of students, regardless of the number of staff.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.109 ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY (1) A child must have reached three years of age before the districts' official start date of the preschool program or have been enrolled by special permission by the board of trustees.
(2) A child who is 4 years of age or older on or before September 10th of the year in which the child is to participate in early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten and who has not completed kindergarten and who is determined through the evaluation methodology process outlined in 10.54.901 to be below a trajectory leading to reading proficiency at the end of 3rd grade is eligible for enrollment in early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.110 EARLY LEARNING CONTENT STANDARDS DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS AND CONTENT STANDARDS (1) The following early learning developmental domains represent the foundational skills all students need to be successful learners. The development of communication, language, and literacy skills supports the growth in all other domains of development. All developmental domains are applicable for public preschool programs and early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten.
(a) The language domain includes communication and comprehension in oral and written language.
(i) language instruction includes opportunities for students to develop:

(A) receptive language, wherein students use listening and observation skills to make sense of and respond to spoken language and other forms of communication; enter into the exchange of information around what is seen, heard, and experienced; and begin to acquire an understanding of the concepts of language that contribute to learning;

(B) expressive language, wherein students develop skills in using sounds, facial expressions, gestures, and words, such as to help others understand their needs, ask questions, express feelings and ideas, and solve problems;

(C) social language, wherein students develop skills to interact and communicate with others in effective ways; and

(D) support for dual language speakers, wherein students receive support in their home language(s) while becoming proficient in English.

(ii) literacy instruction includes opportunities for students to develop:

(A) written language, wherein students build an understanding and interest in the symbols, sounds, and rhythms of written language and develop awareness that the printed word can be used for various purposes;

(B) written communication, wherein students develop interest and skill in using symbols as a meaningful form of communication;

(C) print awareness, wherein students build an understanding that print carries a message through symbols and words and that there is a connection between sounds and letters (the alphabetic principle); and

(D) speech development, wherein students develop an awareness of the sounds of letters and the combination of letters that make up words and use this awareness to manipulate syllables and sounds of speech.

(1)(b) The ~~emotional and~~ social and emotional domain ~~requires instruction which incorporates and:~~ includes culture, family, community as well as social and emotional development.

(a)(i) culture, family, and community~~, wherein students learn to develop~~ skill instruction includes opportunities for students to develop:

(i)(A) an awareness of and appreciation for similarities and differences between themselves and others;

(ii)(B) an awareness of the functions and diverse characteristics of families; and

(iii)(C) an understanding of the basic principles of how communities function, including work roles and commerce.

(ii) social development skill instruction includes opportunities for students to:

(A) develop trust, emotional bonds, and interact comfortably with adults;

(B) interact and build relationships with peers; and

(C) develop skills in cooperation, negotiation, and empathy.

(b)(iii) emotional development ~~wherein students~~ skill instruction includes opportunities for students to:

(i)(A) develop ~~an~~ awareness and appreciation of self as a unique, competent, and capable individual;

(ii)(B) demonstrate a belief in their abilities;

(iii)(C) manage internal states, feelings, and behavior, and develop the ability to adapt to diverse situations and environments; and

(iv)(D) express a wide and varied range of feelings through facial expressions, gestures, behaviors, and words.

~~(c) social development which helps students:~~

~~(i) develop trust, emotional bonds, and interact comfortably with adults;~~
~~(ii) interact and build relationships with peers; and~~
~~(iii) develop skills in cooperation, negotiation, and empathy.~~
~~(2)~~(c) The physical domain ~~requires~~ includes development of motor skills and instruction in health, safety, and personal care.

~~(a)~~(i) ~~Development of~~ motor skills instruction includes opportunities for students to develop:

~~(i)~~(A) small muscle strength, coordination, and skills;

~~(ii)~~(B) large muscle strength, coordination, and skills; and

~~(iii)~~(C) use of their senses to explore the environment and develop skills through sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound.

~~(b)~~(ii) ~~Health~~ health, safety, and personal care ~~standards for early childhood education are that students~~ skill instruction includes opportunities for students to develop:

~~(i)~~(A) ~~develop~~ personal health and hygiene skills as they develop and practice self-care routines;

~~(ii)~~(B) ~~eat a variety of nutritional foods and develop~~ healthy eating practices by eating a variety of nutritional foods;

~~(iii)~~(C) ~~develop~~ healthy behaviors through physical activity; and

~~(iv)~~(D) ~~develop~~ an awareness and understanding of safety rules as they learn to make safe and appropriate choices.

~~(3) The communication domain includes communication, language, and literacy development.~~

~~(a) Standards for early childhood communication and language include:~~

~~(i) receptive communication, wherein students use listening and observation skills to make sense of and respond to spoken language and other forms of communication; enter into the exchange of information around what is seen, heard, and experienced; and begin to acquire an understanding of the concepts of language that contribute to learning;~~

~~(ii) expressive communication, wherein students develop skills in using sounds, facial expressions, gestures, and words, such as to help others understand their needs, ask questions, express feelings and ideas, and solve problems;~~

~~(iii) social communication wherein students develop skills to interact and communicate with others in effective ways; and~~

~~(iv) for dual language speakers, students receive support in their home language(s) while becoming proficient in English.~~

~~(b) Literacy standards for early childhood education are that students develop:~~

~~(i) an understanding, skills, and interest in the symbols, sounds, and rhythms of written language and develop awareness that the printed word can be used for various purposes;~~

~~(ii) interest and skills in using symbols as a meaningful form of communication;~~

~~(iii) an understanding that print carries a message through symbols and words and that there is a connection between sounds and letters (the alphabetic principle); and~~

~~(iv) an awareness of the sounds of letters and the combination of letters that make up words and use this awareness to manipulate syllables and sounds of speech.~~

(4)(d) The cognitive domain requires instruction which incorporates and includes approaches to learning:.

(a)(i) approaches to learning which help students skill instruction includes opportunities for students to develop:

(i)(A) curiosity through imagination, inventiveness, originality, and interest as they explore and experience new things;

(ii)(B) initiative and self-direction through engagement in new tasks and to take risks in learning new skills or information;

(iii)(C) persistence and attentiveness with the ability to focus their attention and concentration to complete tasks and increase their learning; and

(iv)(D) reflection and interpretation skills in thinking about their learning in order to inform their future decisions.; and

(b)(E) development of reasoning and representational thought skills in causation, critical and analytical thinking, problem solving, and representational thought;.

(2) The following early learning content standards are aligned to the Montana K-12 Content Standards and highlight what students should know, understand, and be able to do upon entering kindergarten. All early learning content standards are applicable for public preschool programs while only the English Language Arts and Literacy Content Standards apply to early literacy targeted interventions implemented through the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds and summer jumpstart program preceding kindergarten.

(a) English Language Arts and Literacy standards include:

(i) early reading, wherein students develop an understanding, skill, and interest in alphabet knowledge using the symbols, sounds, and rhythms of written language;

(ii) print development and writing, wherein students demonstrate interest and skill in using symbols as a meaningful form of communication;

(iii) speaking and listening, wherein students use phonemic and phonological awareness to identify and play with individual sounds in spoken words; and

(iv) language, wherein students develop the ability to communicate with others to build relationships, share meaning and express needs.

(c)(b) instruction in creative arts, including standards include:

(i) creative movement, wherein students produce rhythmic movements spontaneously and in imitation with growing technical and artistic abilities;

(ii) drama, wherein students show appreciation and awareness of drama through observation, imitation, and participation in simple dramatic plots;

(iii) music, wherein students engage in a variety of musical or rhythmic activities; and

(iv) visual arts, wherein students demonstrate a growing understanding and appreciation for the creative process and visual arts.

(d)(c) mathematics and numeracy standards for early childhood education are that students include:

(i) develop number sense and operations through, wherein students develop the ability to think and work with numbers, to understand their uses, and describe their relationships through structured and everyday experiences;

(ii) develop an awareness of measurement concepts through, wherein students use of measurement instruments to explore and discover measurement

relationships and characteristics, such as length, quantity, volume, distance, weight, area, and time;

(iii) ~~apply~~ mathematical skills in data analysis, ~~such as~~ wherein students ~~counting~~ count, ~~sorting~~ sort, and ~~comparing~~ compare objects;

(iv) ~~develop an awareness of~~ initial algebraic thinking and operations ~~through counting, sorting, and comparing objects~~, wherein students identify, describe, produce, and create patterns using mathematical language and materials; and

(v) ~~build the foundation for~~ geometric and spatial reasoning, wherein students build the foundation for ~~through recognition~~ recognizing, ~~creation~~ creating, and ~~manipulation~~ manipulating ~~of~~ shapes, and learning spatial reasoning and directional words as they become aware of their bodies and personal space in their physical environment.

~~(e)~~(d) science standards ~~for early childhood education~~ ~~are that students~~ include:

(i) ~~engage in~~ scientific thinking and the use of the scientific methods through investigation using their senses to observe, manipulate objects, ask questions, make predictions, and develop conclusions and generalizations;

(ii) ~~develop~~ an understanding of and compassion for living things;

(iii) ~~develop~~ an understanding of the physical world, the nature and properties of energy, and nonliving matter;

(iv) ~~develop~~ an understanding of the earth and planets; and

(v) ~~develop~~ an understanding of engineering as the process that assists people in designing and building.

~~(f)~~(e) social studies standards ~~for early childhood education~~ ~~that students~~ include:

(i) ~~develop~~ an understanding of the concept of historical time, including past, present, and future;

(ii) ~~develop~~ knowledge of geographical places and regions by understanding that each place has its own unique characteristics and the reciprocal effect individuals have with the world around them; and

(iii) ~~become aware~~ awareness of their natural world, including the environment and our interdependence on the natural world~~;~~. ~~and~~

(f) technology standards include:

~~(iv)~~(i) ~~develop~~ an understanding of technology with awareness of technological tools and developmentally appropriate exploration of the ways to use these resources.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.111 CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT (1) The early childhood curriculum, as defined in ARM 10.63.102, shall:

(a) contain a written philosophy and framework, grounded in research-based understandings of child development, to provide a clear, coherent focus for planning students' experiences;

(b) informing instruction through observation and documentation of children's strengths, interests, and needs in their play, work, and behavior;

(c) guide the learning process and daily plans for learning through the selection of materials and equipment to enhance development and learning in ~~each~~

core domain the early learning developmental domains, including ~~emotional/~~social, emotional, physical, ~~communication~~ language, and cognition; and encourage integration of applicable early ~~childhood~~ learning content areas, including ~~social, emotional, physical, health, safety, language,~~ literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, creative expression and the arts, and technology;

     (d) include planned opportunities for active exploration, discovery, and social interaction;

     (e) plan for students' engagement in play each day; and

     (f) be implemented in a manner reflective of students' family and community lives while being responsive to diversity, including gender, age, language, culture, and ability, including opportunities for students and families to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians, particularly Montana Indian tribes, in a culturally responsive manner (20-1-501, MCA).

     (2) School districts shall develop ~~preschool~~ early childhood education programs to include an ongoing and systematic written assessment plan which includes protocols for:

     (a) monitoring the progress of students toward achieving content standards and learning in the developmental domains using formative and summative approaches that include universal screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic assessments;

     (b) administration of assessments and interpretation of assessment results;

     (c) providing disaggregated data to educators and teams to inform instructional planning and decision making;

     (d) involving families as partners in linguistically and culturally responsive ways to inform decisions about students' needs; and

     (e) assessing the effectiveness of the instructional program that guides adjustments for improvement.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

     10.63.112 INSTRUCTION (1) The ~~preschool~~ early childhood education program shall ensure developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching strategies that enhance students' development and learning of the early learning content standards ARM 10.63.110 through the program's curriculum.

     (2) The ~~preschool~~ early childhood education instructional program shall:

     (a) use both content and child development knowledge to create learning opportunities and to engage young learners in meaningful, planned, and purposeful experiences related to the curriculum goals and content standards;

     (b) use a variety of effective approaches and strategies which include opportunities for both teacher and student-initiated interactions and activities;

     (c) support children's development by providing opportunities for all children to play with and learn from each other;

     (d) use knowledge of each student's development to enhance instruction, modify strategies and materials, and adjust supports and challenges as students gain competence, understanding, and skills;

     (e) build upon student's language, understanding of concepts, and increase vocabulary;

(f) integrate knowledge of students' families and the community to build relationships that foster integral connections with the curriculum and learning experiences;

(g) use cultural and community resources in the classroom to enhance student learning and development; and

(h) work as a team to implement learning plans, including plans for students with special needs.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.113 PHYSICAL AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (1) The ~~preschool~~ early childhood education program shall ensure an appropriate and well-maintained safe and healthful physical environment that:

(a) is designed to protect student health and safety;

(b) allows for supervision of students primarily by sight;

(c) provides sanitization according to state and federal health standards;

(d) follows state and federal guidelines for meals and snacks; and

(e) provides safe, supervised, and adequate outside play space with age-appropriate equipment and safe, adequate indoor space for each child.

(2) The ~~preschool~~ early childhood education program shall ensure a safe and healthful learning environment by:

(a) providing a written predictable but flexible schedule that provides intentionally planned routines and transitions; and

(b) providing daily indoor and outdoor activities, including:

(i) planned learning center time where students have individual choice of activities;

(ii) daily opportunities to learn and play individually, in small groups, and as a whole group; and

(iii) use of developmentally appropriate materials and equipment.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.114 CHILD GUIDANCE (1) Child guidance means employing a variety of strategies to foster self-regulation, respect for others, problem solving, and ~~emotional and~~ social and emotional development in an ongoing interactive process and helps students learn how to communicate with others in developmentally appropriate ways. To ensure appropriate child guidance, the ~~preschool~~ early childhood education program shall:

(a) use positive behavior supports to ensure the social, emotional, and cultural development of each student;

(b) provide a positive climate to ensure equality, inclusion, and citizenship;

(c) develop relationships with the student and the student's family in ways that are linguistically and culturally sensitive;

(d) provide opportunities for students to be contributing members of the classroom community;

(e) provide clear behavioral expectations, including the use of effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior; and

(f) partner with families and other professionals for students with challenging behavior to develop and implement an individualized plan that fosters the child's inclusion and success.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

10.63.115 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (1) The program staff shall establish and maintain collaborative relationships with each child's family and community to foster student's development in all settings.
(2) To ensure collaborative relationships between the community, school, and families, ~~preschool~~ early childhood education programs shall have protocols which:
(a) establish intentional practices designed to foster strong reciprocal relationships with families;
(b) ensure that families are an integral part of the decision-making team through communication and family conferences which promote dialogue and partnership regarding their student's educational goals and services;
(c) collaborate with families to help students participate successfully in early childhood settings;
(d) ensure that all families, regardless of family structure, socioeconomic, racial, religious, and cultural diversity, gender, abilities, or preferred languages are included in their child's educational experience;
(e) assist families in locating, contacting, and using community resources that support the student's well-being, development, and goals;
(f) promote awareness and understanding of the unique legal and political structures of Montana Tribal Nations in order to best meet the needs of Indian students and families;
(g) collaborate with community-based programs to ensure that parents and families have the resources they need to be involved in their student's education, growth, and development; and
(h) provide access to health screenings and referrals for all students in the program.

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

4. The rule proposed to be repealed provide as follows:

10.63.108 AGGREGATE HOURS

AUTH: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA
IMP: Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

REASON: The board proposes the amendment and repeal of the existing Title 10, Chapter 63, Early Childhood Education Standards to comply with HB 352 (2023). The Early Literacy Advisory Council, created by the board, recommended the proposed revisions to address the purposes of the legislation to provide parents with voluntary early literacy interventions for their children, increase the number of children who are reading proficient at the end of third grade, and foster a strong

economic return for the state on early literacy investments. Additionally, the Council aligned the revised standards with the language in 20-7-1803(5)(b), MCA, that states, "The classroom-based program must align with developmentally appropriate early childhood education learning standards as determined by the board of public education…". The rules be located in subchapter 1, which will be renamed "Early Childhood Education Standards".

     5. Concerned persons may submit their data, views, or arguments concerning the proposed action in writing to: McCall Flynn, Executive Director, Board of Public Education, 46 N. Last Chance Gulch, Suite 2B, P.O. Box 200601, Helena, Montana, 59620; telephone (406) 444-0300; or e-mail bpe@mt.gov, and must be received no later than 5:00 p.m., March 8, 2024.

     6. McCall Flynn, executive director, Board of Public Education, has been designated to preside over and conduct this hearing.

     7. The board maintains a list of interested persons who wish to receive notices of rulemaking actions proposed by this agency. Persons who wish to have their name added to the list shall make a written request that includes the name, e-mail, and mailing address of the person to receive notices and specifies for which program the person wishes to receive notices. Notices will be sent by e-mail unless a mailing preference is noted in the request. Such written request may be mailed or delivered to the contact person in 4 above or may be made by completing a request form at any rules hearing held by the agency.

     8. An electronic copy of this proposal notice is available through the Secretary of State's web site at http://sosmt.gov/ARM/Register.

     9. The bill sponsor contact requirements of 2-4-302, MCA, apply and have been fulfilled. The primary bill sponsor was contacted by email on January 8, 2024.

     10. With regard to the requirements of 2-4-111, MCA, the board has determined that amendment of the above-referenced rule will not significantly and directly impact small businesses.

/s/ McCall Flynn   /s/ Tim Tharp
McCall Flynn   Tim Tharp
Executive Director   Chair
Board of Public Education   Board of Public Education

Certified to the Secretary of State January 30, 2024.