



**MONTANA  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
REGISTER**



**BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

---

**NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING**

**MAR NOTICE NO. 2025-479.1**

**Summary**

Amendment of ARM 10.54.901 through 10.54.903 pertaining to the Early Literacy Targeted Interventions Standards and ARM 10.63.101 through 10.63.107, 10.63.109, and 10.63.115 pertaining to the Early Childhood Education Standards

---

**Hearing Date and Time**

Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

**Virtual Hearing Information**

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/81268592378>

**Comments**

Comments may be submitted using the contact information below. Comments must be received by Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

---

**Accommodations**

The agency 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. Requests must be made by Tuesday, December 23, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

## Contact

McCall Flynn  
(406) 444-6576  
bpe@mt.gov

---

## General Reasonable Necessity Statement

In 2023, Representative Brad Barker (House District 55) sponsored HB 352 to provide targeted interventions to support third 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 third grade. The Board of Public Education was also required to choose a home-based early literacy program and design a framework for jumpstart programs for early literacy targeted interventions in schools.

Building upon this foundation, in 2025, Representative Melissa Romano (House District 80) sponsored HB 338 to provide targeted interventions to support third grade numeracy 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 numeracy proficiency upon completion of third grade. It also allowed for enrollment and program screening year-round.

The Board of Public Education proposes these rules to align to the requirements in statute and maintain consistency throughout other necessary rules. ARM Title 10, chapter 54, subchapter 9 will be renamed as “Early Targeted Interventions.”

---

## Rulemaking Actions

### AMEND

The rules proposed to be amended are as follows, stricken matter interlined, new matter underlined:

#### 10.54.901 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY FOR EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

- (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;
  - (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 to 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).
- (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 or math proficiency on completion of third grade.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-1803, MCA

#### **10.54.902 JUMPSTART PROGRAM FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY ~~LITERACY~~-TARGETED INTERVENTIONS**

- (1) The local board of trustees may offer a jumpstart program to support early ~~literacy~~ targeted interventions based on evaluation methodology identified in ARM 10.54.901 as aligned to the Montana Early Childhood Education Standards and the Montana Content Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematics.
- (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 or math proficiency at the end of third grade.

- (3) For the purposes of this rule, "jumpstart program" means a program that is at least four 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.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-1803, MCA

#### **10.54.903 EARLY NUMERACY INTEGRATION FOR 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR EVALUATION METHODOLOGY FOR EARLY NUMERACY TARGETED INTERVENTIONS**

- (1) ~~A local school district that administered the evaluation methodology for early literacy targeted interventions in accordance with ARM 10.54.901 in preparation for the 2025-2026 school year may admit qualified students in the classroom-based program for 4-year-olds. The local board of trustees shall adopt and ensure use of an evaluation methodology to identify, enroll, and admit children to early 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 must assess at least one of the following numeracy skills:~~
  - (a) For four-year olds:
    - (i) number naming;
    - (ii) one-to-one correspondence;
    - (iii) oral counting;
    - (iv) quantity comparison.
  - (b) Prior to kindergarten:
    - (i) number naming;
    - (ii) one-to-one correspondence;
    - (iii) oral counting;

- (iv) quantity comparison;
  - (v) cardinality.
- (c) Prior to first grade:
  - (i) oral counting;
  - (ii) quantity comparison;
  - (iii) cardinality;
  - (iv) subitizing;
  - (v) numeral identification;
  - (vi) math composite.
- (d) Prior to second grade:
  - (i) subitizing;
  - (ii) number order;
  - (iii) strategic counting;
  - (iv) numeral identification;
  - (v) number comparison;
  - (vi) addition and subtraction;
  - (vii) math composite.
- (e) Prior to third grade:
  - (i) numeral identification;
  - (ii) number comparison;
  - (iii) addition and subtraction;
  - (iv) problems in context;
  - (v) math composite.
- (2) The early targeted interventions may include both English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematics and Numeracy Content Standards as described in ARM 10.63.110(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 to 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).

(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 or math proficiency on completion of third grade.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

#### **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 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. Use of these standards for a public preschool program is subject to the funding limits of 20-7-117(2) and 20-9-311(7)(a), 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 is subject to the provisions of Title 20, chapter 7, part 18, MCA.
- (2) The trustees of a school district, pursuant to Title 20, chapter 6, MCA, may establish a public early childhood education program to meet the unique developmental needs for children between the ages of 3 and 5 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 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 early childhood education standards of early learning content and accreditation in coordination with the standards outlined for schools within ARM Title 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, early childhood education programs will be assessed on the program's assurance standards only.

- (3) 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 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.
- (4) Montana's early childhood education standards shall be reviewed and revised on a recurring schedule with input from representatives of accredited schools.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 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 early childhood education children's learning and growth. The four core domains include social and emotional, physical, 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 subjects of literacy and numeracy with a goal of establishing a trajectory leading to reading or math proficiency at the end of third 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" means an adult with the qualifications detailed in ARM 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 early childhood education students.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

### **10.63.103 LEADERSHIP**

- (1) The early childhood education 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 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.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 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) Teachers with an early childhood (P-3) endorsement shall be considered to be appropriately licensed, endorsed, and assigned to teach in an accredited preschool program.
- (3) 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.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

#### **10.63.105 EARLY CHILDHOOD PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

- (1) Early childhood paraprofessionals must have:
  - (a) completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; or

- (b) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or
- (c) a high school diploma and meet a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to assist in the delivery of the curriculum, instruction, and program delivery standards to support students' development of the knowledge and skills outlined in the early learning content standards.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

#### **10.63.106 EARLY CHILDHOOD PARAPROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION**

- (1) Early childhood paraprofessionals shall be under the direct supervision of a licensed teacher who is responsible for instruction and assessment of students.
- (2) Early childhood paraprofessionals assigned to assist students with special education needs shall be under the supervision of the teacher.
- (3) The supervising teacher shall be available while an early childhood paraprofessional is fulfilling his or her responsibilities and shall not be simultaneously assigned to another teaching duty or preparation time.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

#### **10.63.107 CLASS SIZE**

- (1) There must be one appropriately licensed and endorsed teacher for ~~ten~~ 10 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 1/2 hours per day, per student overload. An overload of five students per classroom is considered excessive.~~
- (2) With classrooms exceeding 10 students, an early childhood paraprofessional is required at a rate of one hour per day, per student overload up to 16 students. At

16 to 18 students, a minimum of one appropriately licensed and endorsed teacher and one early childhood paraprofessional is required.

- (3) School districts are encouraged to exceed these standards for classrooms exceeding 10 students with additional staffing beyond the requirements in (2).

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 ARM 10.54.901 or 10.54.903 to be below a trajectory leading to reading or math proficiency at the end of third 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.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

### **10.63.115 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- (1) The early childhood education program staff shall establish and maintain collaborative relationships with each child's family and community to foster the student's development in all settings.
- (2) To ensure collaborative relationships between the community, school, and families, 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.

**Authorizing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-2-114, 20-7-101, 20-7-1803, MCA

**Implementing statute(s):** Mont. Const. Art. X, sec. 9, 20-7-101, 20-7-117, 20-7-1803, MCA

---

### **Small Business Impact**

The Board of Public Education adopts rules that primarily impact teachers, administrators, and school district operations. The board works in cooperation with public schools across the state to implement the rules that are adopted. Given that the board does not work directly with small businesses, the small business impact analysis performed as required under 2-4-111, MCA, indicates that no small businesses are likely to be directly impacted by the proposed rule changes.

---

### **Bill Sponsor Notification**

The bill sponsor contact requirements apply and have been fulfilled. The primary bill sponsor was contacted by email on May 7, 2025.

---

### **Interested Persons**

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, email, 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 email unless a mailing preference is noted in the request. Such written request may be mailed or delivered to the contact person above or may be made by completing a request form at any rules hearing held by the board.

---

### **Rule Reviewer**

McCall Flynn

### **Approval**

Dr. Tim Tharp  
Board Chair