



Montana Board of Public Education

Public Charter School Application

JUNE 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Title 20, Chapter 6, Part 8, MCA, authorizes the establishment of public charter schools in Montana and tasks the Montana Board of Public Education as the sole entity authorized to enter into public charter contracts with a governing board. There are two types of public charter schools – those operating under an existing local school board and those operating as a new school district under a separate governing board. This Public Charter School Application is for both options.

A public charter school means a public school that has autonomy over decisions including, but not limited to, matters concerning finance, personnel, scheduling, curriculum, and instruction as defined in a public charter contract. Public charter schools are governed by a local school board, or in the case of a governing board other than a local school board, by the governing board of the public charter school district of which the public charter school is a part. Public charter schools are established and operated under the terms of a public charter contract and allow parents to choose to enroll their children. Public charter schools must admit students based on a lottery if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated.

Public charter schools provide a program of education that may include any or all grades from kindergarten through grade 12 and vocational education programs and operate in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives as defined in its public charter contract, and must demonstrate a commitment to and robust understanding of personalized and proficiency-based learning.

The evaluation of your application will focus on whether implementing the proposals in your application will lead to the academic, organizational, and financial performance you are promising in exchange for potential broad flexibility from Montana’s education standards. The evaluation will determine whether:

- there is an overall intent to create an innovative public charter school;
- there is an overall intent to create a high-performing public charter school;
- the academic program is consistent with a high-quality public charter school;
- the school governance is consistent with a high-quality public charter school;
- the business operations are consistent with a high-quality public charter school;
- the community support and need is consistent with a high-quality public charter school;
- there is clear and convincing proof of the likelihood of success;

- they can open and operate a successful public charter school; and
- there is a commitment to and robust understanding of personalized and proficiency-based learning.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

To facilitate the Montana Board of Public Education's review of public charter school applications, applicants must submit the application to bpe@mt.gov between the dates of October 27-31, 2025, with a deadline of October 31, 2025 at 5PM. All submission materials must be submitted in a single electronic submission. Multiple attachments will not be accepted in the submission. The Board will review the public charter school application, and if determined complete, will facilitate an interview and take public comment on the application. Final approval of the application will take place at the January 2026 Board of Public Education meeting. Please note the timeline on the Board's webpage under the Public Charter School tab.

Please provide a brief, direct response to each question using this application template and limit the application to 26 pages. Any appendices, handbooks, policies, and additional documents will be considered as supporting documentation. Please include links, when possible, and refrain from including lengthier documents.

Please note that submitting a public charter school application does not guarantee approval and that a public charter school contract will be granted. Failure to adhere to any requirements may lead to an incomplete application that is rejected before consideration.

PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Check One: ☒ New Public Charter under existing local school board ☐ New Public Charter District

Name of Public Charter School Park Pathways School

Local school district in which the public charter school will be physically located: Livingston Public Schools

Contact Information for the Governing Board Chair

Contact Person: Dan Vermillion Board Chairperson
Name Title

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Contact Information for the Person Completing this Application

Contact Person: Eldon C Johnson Superintendent
Name Title

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Local Board of Trustee Evidence

Check One: X Approved by existing local school board Refused approval by existing local school board

Provide copy of local school board minutes as evidence.

[Unofficial Special Board Meeting Minutes 10/28/2025](#)

PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION

Name of Public Charter School: Park Pathways School

Provide an executive summary with the general purpose and rationale for the creation of the public charter school, and explain how the proposed public charter school is different from a program that you could operate or are currently operating without the public charter designation.

Executive Summary

General Purpose and Rationale

Livingston Public Schools proposes the creation of Park Pathways School, a public charter school designed for students in grades 7–12 who thrive in flexible, personalized, and proficiency-based learning environments. The purpose of Park Pathways is to expand equitable educational options within the district by providing individualized, experience-driven pathways for students who are disengaged, underperforming, or ready for accelerated, nontraditional learning opportunities.

The rationale for establishing Park Pathways stems from a clearly identified local need. Through extensive community engagement—including focus groups, surveys, and stakeholder collaboration—Livingston Public Schools has documented strong support for more diverse, hands-on, and relationship-centered learning models. Data from the district’s Early Warning System (EWS) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) indicate that a significant number of students entering middle and high school continue to face barriers to success in traditional structures. Park Pathways directly addresses these gaps by creating a program rooted in relevance, flexibility, and mastery rather than seat time, offering students authentic connections between learning, community, and future readiness.

How Park Pathways Differs from Existing Programs

While Livingston Public Schools already operates a range of strong academic and alternative programs—including Project 71, Park Online Education (POE), and transformational learning initiatives—none function with the full autonomy or design flexibility of a public charter school. Park Pathways is distinct in several key ways:

1. **Autonomy and Innovation:** Park Pathways will operate under a charter framework that allows autonomy over curriculum, scheduling, and staffing, enabling the school to innovate beyond traditional constraints while maintaining accountability to Montana Content Standards and district policy.
2. **Personalized, Proficiency-Based Learning:** Unlike current programs that rely on standard course progression and grading systems, Park Pathways will use portfolio-based, rubric-driven assessment to award credit based on demonstrated proficiency. Students will progress at their own pace, guided by individualized Pathway Plans developed with Learning Pathway Advisors and families.
3. **Integrated, Experience-Based Curriculum:** The instructional model will emphasize project-based, place-based, and work-based learning—embedding academic standards within community partnerships, internships, and interdisciplinary projects that connect directly to real-world contexts.

4. Expanded MTSS and EWS Alignment: Pathways extends the district's MTSS framework into the secondary level by providing an alternative environment for students who remain nonresponsive to traditional academic supports. It also leverages Early Warning System indicators to identify and re-engage students at risk of course failure or non-graduation.
5. Equity and Access: Park Pathways is designed to serve a broad spectrum of learners—including those impacted by extenuating circumstances, students who are career-focused or advanced students seeking early college or workforce preparation—ensuring all students have meaningful access to success. An anticipated goal would be to bring back students who have withdrawn from Livingston Public Schools and to provide a potential alternative for students within the larger community (e.g., out-of-district).

In essence, Park Pathways School represents both an evolution and an innovation within Livingston Public Schools: a reimagined public learning environment that connects rigor with relevance, autonomy with accountability, and individual growth with community connection. Through this charter designation, Livingston Public Schools will be able to fully implement a flexible, research-informed model that could not operate within the limits of a traditional school structure, thereby fulfilling its mission to ensure that every student has a viable and purposeful pathway to lifelong learning.

Opening Date: August 2026 Public Charter Term Length: Fall 2026-Spring 2031
 Grades to be served: 7-12
 Minimum Enrollment Per Year: 68
 Planned Enrollment Per Year: 68-100
 Maximum Enrollment Per Year: 120

During the proposed public charter 5-year term, indicate the specific grade-level programs that you plan to serve:
 Check all that apply: Elementary Program X Middle Grades Program X High School Program

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

	Elementary							Middle		High School				Total Fulltime ANB
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Year 1								13	10	16	11	11	7	68
Year 2								10	13	9	16	11	11	70
Year 3								11	10	13	9	16	11	70
Year 4								15	15	15	19	15	16	95
Year 5								20	20	20	20	20	20	120

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

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

Mission:

Park Pathways School empowers its rural Montana students to pursue meaningful post-secondary outcomes through individualized learning experiences filling critical gaps for students who thrive less in the traditional school settings.

Vision:

We envision a dynamic learning community where students are invested in work that matters to them—academically, personally, and socially. With the guidance and mentorship of skilled educators, students receive a flexible learning experience to develop self-reliance, set individualized learning plans, and gain academic proficiencies and skills that reflect their unique paths. Through experience-based learning, community partnerships, and family involvement, our students will become capable and connected citizens prepared to thrive in a diverse world.

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

Targeted Population

Park Pathways School will serve students in grades 7 through 12 from all backgrounds who demonstrate the need for, or the potential to benefit from, a nontraditional, personalized approach to learning. The program is designed to meet the needs of diverse learners, including both those who face barriers to success in conventional settings and those who seek more rigorous, relevant, or self-directed pathways to achievement.

Specifically, Park Pathways School will enroll students who exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- **Inquiry-Driven and Experiential Learners**
 - Students who demonstrate aptitude or enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge and skills through inquiry-based, project-based, multi-disciplinary, place-based, work-based, or experiential learning approaches.
- **Learners Who Thrive Outside the Traditional Schedule**
 - Students who show potential to perform at higher levels in a flexible, competency-based learning environment rather than within the constraints of the traditional bell schedule and single-subject course structure.
- **Students Identified by the Early Warning System (EWS)**
 - Students whose EWS profiles indicate risk for course failure or non-graduation (e.g., those who are, or who are projected to become, two or more credits deficient).
- **Students Currently Disengaged from Public School**
 - Students not presently enrolled in public education due to factors such as educational preference, social or emotional barriers, or limited engagement within traditional school settings.
- **Persistent Non-Responders to Intervention**
 - Students who have not responded to tiered content-area interventions provided during the K–6 years and who may benefit from alternate, MTSS-aligned pathways to graduation and postsecondary success.
- **Twice-Exceptional Students**
 - Students identified as both gifted and having a disability, whose learning profiles may be better supported within a flexible, exploratory, and strengths-based instructional model.

- **Career-Focused Learners**
 - Students who intend to pursue trade certification, community college programs, or direct entry into the workforce either prior to or immediately following high school graduation.
- **Nontraditional College-Bound Learners**
 - Students seeking an alternative route to four-year college readiness, similar to the pathways often followed by homeschooled or independent-study students.
- **Students Affected by Adverse Life Circumstances**
 - Students whose educational progress has been disrupted by trauma, unstable housing, complex family dynamics, or other external factors impacting school engagement and achievement.
- **Students with Mental Health Needs**
 - Students whose emotional or mental well-being may be better supported through the smaller, relationship-centered, and personalized learning environment offered by the Pathways model.

Many students flourish within the traditional college-preparatory model that characterizes most U.S. public middle and high schools—structured, synchronous learning organized into six to eight daily class periods, each devoted to a single discipline and delivered through a combination of lecture, discussion, project-based work, and assigned reading. In this model, learning outcomes are most commonly measured through quizzes and examinations.

While this traditional framework effectively supports a majority of learners, some students experience persistent challenges within it. Others perform well yet may be ready to engage in more rigorous, relevant, and self-directed learning experiences. Livingston Public Schools (LPS) seeks to address the needs of both groups through the establishment of the Pathways School, a program designed to provide personalized, alternative routes to academic and postsecondary success.

Pathways will serve students in grades 7 through 12. Research on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provides a clear rationale for this initiative. According to leading MTSS scholar Dr. Tessie Bailey, longitudinal meta-analyses of MTSS implementation demonstrate strong effectiveness through approximately grade 6. However, for students who remain non-responsive to intervention beyond that point, the efficacy of traditional content-area screening and remediation declines substantially. For these learners, evidence supports the creation of alternative pathways that re-engage students through different learning environments, instructional modalities, and measures of success.

Accordingly, within LPS, the district’s Early Learning and elementary programs (PreK–Grade 6) will continue to rely on systematic screening, benchmark, and summative assessments to drive targeted interventions under the MTSS framework. Beginning in grade 7, however, the district will transition to the Early Warning System (EWS) as its primary indicator of risk for course failure and non-graduation. While content-area assessments will continue to inform supports where appropriate, for students in grades 7–12 who demonstrate a pattern of non-response to traditional interventions, enrollment in the Pathways School will represent an MTSS-aligned alternative route to academic achievement and graduation.

In addition to serving students at risk of disengagement, Pathways will also meet the needs of a smaller population of advanced and gifted learners who may find the traditional model insufficiently challenging. For instance, a student who completes all high school graduation requirements by the sophomore year requires a learning environment that extends beyond standard curricular boundaries. The flexible, competency-based design of Pathways will enable such students to pursue accelerated coursework, interdisciplinary inquiry, dual-enrollment opportunities, and capstone projects that connect learning to authentic, real-world contexts.

By implementing the Pathways model, Livingston Public Schools aims to:

- Provide a research-informed alternative for students underperforming or disengaged in traditional settings;
- Extend opportunities for personalized, competency-based learning;
- Strengthen alignment between MTSS and EWS practices across grade levels; and
- Offer accelerated pathways for high-achieving students whose needs exceed the scope of conventional coursework.

Through these strategies, the Pathways School will expand educational equity, engagement, and achievement for all learners—ensuring that every student in Livingston Public Schools has a viable and meaningful path to success.

The Park Pathways philosophy is that in the right environment, *all students* can re-engage, rediscover purpose, and thrive. When instruction is relevant, applied, and connected to the real world, students who have struggled in traditional settings often experience renewed motivation and success. Civic, place-based, project-based, work-based, and inquiry-driven learning can serve as the great equalizer—bridging the gap between students who excel in conventional academic models and those whose talents and potential are revealed through active, experiential learning.

For example, while some students may find it challenging to keep pace with textbook-based instruction or chapter assessments, many of these same learners thrive when engaged in authentic experiences such as science fairs, stream restoration initiatives, field studies, job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, and pre-apprenticeship programs. These experiences allow students to apply academic concepts in meaningful contexts, develop employability skills, and connect their education to tangible community outcomes.

Educational researcher Dr. Mike Schmoker cautions that project-based learning fails when it becomes “all about the project and not about the learning”—that is, when it lacks rigor, coherence, and clear learning outcomes. The Pathways model is intentionally designed to avoid this pitfall. Every project, field experience, and applied learning opportunity will be firmly grounded in academic standards, measurable skill development, and reflective practice.

Students targeted for Pathways will demonstrate both the interest and capacity to engage deeply in a customized, hands-on learning environment. They will be young people eager to make a positive difference in their community, advance their own educational and career goals, and demonstrate mastery of essential knowledge and competencies as defined by:

- State academic standards, ensuring rigor and alignment;
- Employability metrics, emphasizing readiness for postsecondary pathways and the workforce; and
- Whole-child skill development frameworks, promoting collaboration, resilience, problem-solving, and civic responsibility.

Through this integrated approach, Park Pathways School will cultivate learners who are competent, confident, and connected—prepared not only to graduate, but to contribute meaningfully to their communities and to their own lifelong success.

The Livingston and Park County Community

Livingston Public Schools (LPS) serves a geographically expansive attendance area that stretches west to Bozeman Pass, east to Springdale, south to Emigrant, and north to Grannis. While the majority of students who enroll in Park Pathways School are expected to reside within this area, the program anticipates additional

interest from students outside district boundaries who seek an alternative, place-based, and personalized learning model.

The City of Livingston, with a population of approximately 9,021 residents (latest estimate), is notable for its exceptional diversity of backgrounds, interests, and professions. The community draws individuals engaged in ranching, hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, the arts, and a range of skilled trades and professional fields. Many residents report choosing Livingston initially for its natural beauty and proximity to outdoor amenities, and ultimately staying for its vibrant, creative, and close-knit community. As a result, local students bring to school a wide array of experiences, talents, and motivations—many deeply rooted in a strong sense of purpose and place.

Park County, situated in south-central Montana, is a geographically diverse and predominantly rural region that serves as one of the principal gateways to Yellowstone National Park. The county's population of approximately 17,000 is dispersed across a mix of small towns, agricultural lands, river valleys, and mountainous terrain. This landscape presents both distinct opportunities and unique challenges for families and schools, particularly in maintaining equitable access to innovative and relevant educational options.

Livingston, the county seat and the home of Park Pathways School, provides an ideal setting for the development of alternative educational models and work-based learning partnerships. Its size and infrastructure allow for collaboration with a range of local employers, community organizations, and civic institutions not always available in smaller, more remote communities within the county.

Beyond Livingston, Park County encompasses several smaller but vital communities—Gardiner, located at the northern entrance to Yellowstone and driven by tourism-based economies and seasonal populations; Clyde Park, an agricultural community with deep ranching traditions; and Emigrant, Pray, and Wilsall, each maintaining distinct rural identities and strong community pride. Families in these areas often face challenges related to transportation, broadband access, and geographic isolation, all of which can limit consistent engagement with diverse educational opportunities.

Despite its remarkable natural beauty and strong community fabric, Park County faces persistent disparities in educational engagement, mental health access, and student outcomes. Students navigating poverty, trauma, or social-emotional challenges are disproportionately affected. Numerous community partners—including Livingston HealthCare, Community Health Partners, L'esprit Mental Health Center, and the Rural Behavioral Health Institute—work collaboratively with local schools to support students and families. However, demand for services continues to exceed the capacity of available providers.

Park Pathways School is designed to address these needs directly. By offering a personalized, place-based, and relationship-centered educational environment, Pathways will expand access to relevant, rigorous, and supportive learning opportunities for students across Park County. The program aims to serve as both a model of innovation and a bridge to equity, ensuring that every student—regardless of background, geography, or circumstance—has a meaningful path to academic, personal, and career success.

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

Park Pathways School will engage in a variety of recruitment actions to support students and families in applying. The Community Outreach Committee (referenced later in this application) will host informational events for families/students, reach out to individual families, including those who have expressed interest in alternative programming, connect with local businesses and community organizations, and work with already interested students to recruit new applicants to the program. The Community Outreach Committee and the Park Pathways Leadership Team will work with existing public and private schools in the community to appropriately disseminate information and applications.

Park Pathways School will conduct its enrollment during a designated application window in the Spring of 2026. All prospective students must submit an application to the district within this period to be considered for admission. Incomplete applications submitted prior to closing deadline will be returned to the applicant for completion. If incomplete applications are submitted and unable to be returned prior to the deadline, then they will be screened last. If all seats are filled during the initial enrollment a waitlist will be created to fill seats throughout the year, that may become available. However, if there is no waitlist, rolling enrollment will occur to fill open seats throughout the year. In accordance with 20-6-808, MCA, in-district applicants will be screened first and admitted using the Admission Decision Guide. If seats remain after enrolling in-district students, out-of-district applicants will be screened and admitted using the Admission Decision Guide. Out-of-district students are welcome to apply but will be required to complete the application process and follow the District's Integrated Strategic Action Plan (ISAP). Additionally, students who indicate a desire for full-time enrollment will be screened and granted enrollment prior to students who desire partial enrollment.

The enrollment screening process will follow this order:

1. In-district students who desire full-time enrollment at Park Pathways School
2. In-district students who desire part-time enrollment at Park Pathways School
3. Out-of-district students who desire full-time enrollment at Park Pathways School
4. Out-of-district students who desire part-time enrollment at Park Pathways School

Following the close of the initial enrollment window, the Enrollment Screening Team will evaluate all submissions in accordance with the criteria outlined in the Admission Decision Guide. Applications will be ranked using a rubric (e.g., outlined in the Admission Decision Guide) and scored out of a total score of 50. Students will be admitted to the program based on their total points, with students scoring a 50 being admitted first, students scoring a 49 second, students scoring a 48 third, and so forth. If the number of students in any remaining score category exceeds the number of seats available, (e.g., 65/68 seats have been filled, and 5 applications are ranked a score of 30) applications in this category will be admitted through a randomized lottery process.

Students who are not admitted either via criteria selection or the lottery process will be placed on a waitlist and admitted using the same process described above.

The same but separate enrollment process will be implemented for both the middle school and high school program seats. For example, in the first year, the middle school program will enroll the equivalent of 23 fulltime ANB and the high school program will enroll the equivalent of 45 fulltime ANB.

[Park Pathways Student Application & Admission Decision Guide](#)

Families and students will not be told whether they were selected or drawn by lottery, in order that no student be unfairly identified as having met certain criteria by virtue of admission status.

Once a student is enrolled in Park Pathways School, they will not need to re-apply in future years.

To apply, students must submit:

- A completed application

These will be reviewed by the Enrollment Screening Team, which includes at minimum:

- The charter school administration
- A teacher

Factors Considered for Enrollment

- Willingness to earn placement in the program and engage in alternative learning (e.g., project-based/work-based learning)
- Willingness to collaborate with a Learning Pathway Advisor
- Attendance and/or engagement in current schooling
- Previous academic performance
- Previous school behavior
- Extenuating circumstances (e.g., Health/medical barriers, unhoused)

***Note:** Students expelled by any district would not be eligible to enroll at Park Pathways School.*

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

The Park Pathways School instructional model is grounded in five essential, research-informed questions that drive every learner's individualized pathway:

1. What do students need to know and be able to do?
2. How do we teach it?
3. How do we know if students know and can do it?
4. What do we do if students do not know or cannot do it?
5. What do we do if students already know and can do it?

These questions frame the school's approach to curriculum, assessment, and instruction, establishing a comprehensive, research-driven Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) tailored to grades 7–12 learners.

1. What Do Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do?

Students at Park Pathways will demonstrate:

- Mastery of Montana Content Standards, ensuring academic rigor and alignment with state accreditation requirements.
- Civic and personal readiness, including the willingness to explore, take measured risks, and engage responsibly in their learning environments.
- Employability competencies, such as:
 - Punctuality and reliability
 - Appropriate and safe work habits
 - Collaboration and teamwork
 - Effective time and task management
 - Self-motivation and independence
 - Receptiveness to feedback and coaching
 - Conflict resolution, self-regulation, and cooperative problem-solving
- Capacity for lifelong learning and contribution, characterized by curiosity, adaptability, and purposeful engagement in community life.

2. How Do We Teach It?

Instruction at Pathways will be personalized, competency-based, and grounded in consultation between each student and their assigned Learning Pathway Advisor. Students will achieve learning objectives through a balanced combination of:

a. Direct, Teacher-Led Instruction (Anticipated up to 25% of Time)

Certain foundational concepts may require explicit instruction and guided practice, for example:

- Mathematical reasoning, facts, and functions
- The scientific method and data analysis
- Identification and evaluation of primary sources
- Safe and ethical use of tools, technology, and the Internet

b. Experiential and Applied Learning (Anticipated at least 75% of Time)

Students will engage in teacher-assisted, inquiry-based, place-based, multi-disciplinary, and project-based learning experiences that connect knowledge to authentic contexts. Examples might include:

- A year-long, place-based project addressing all 7th-grade science standards while integrating English language arts, social studies, and physical education outcomes.
 - [Pathways Example Unit](#)
- Work-based learning opportunities linking multiple content areas through real-world application.
- Community improvement initiatives uniting objectives in social studies, English language arts, science, and mathematics.

Pathways instruction can be asynchronous, non-sequential, and mastery-based, allowing students to progress upon demonstrated proficiency rather than seat time. Teachers will serve as consultants, advisors, facilitators, and instructors, emphasizing relationship-building and relevance.

c. Instructional Partnerships

Learning experiences will be enriched through collaboration with:

- Business and industry partners
- Community organizations and public agencies
- Institutions of higher education

d. Instructional Staffing Priorities

Pathways will prioritize hiring educators who:

- Build strong, supportive teacher-learner relationships;
- Demonstrate expertise in connecting applied content knowledge to real-world contexts; and
- Excel at guiding strengths-based, interdisciplinary, systems-level learning.

3. How Do We Know If Students Know and Can Do It?

Student assessment at Pathways will be portfolio-oriented, rubric-driven, and proficiency-based, ensuring rigor, equity, and authenticity in measuring student learning.

a. Proficiency-Based Assessment

- Students will compile comprehensive learning portfolios aligned to academic and employability standards.
- Rubrics will describe observable indicators of proficiency and provide defensible evidence of mastery.
- Students will have multiple, meaningful pathways to demonstrate learning across content areas.
- Credit will be awarded based on proficiency as demonstrated in the rubric-judged assessment portfolios

For example, a student's entrepreneurial project might demonstrate proficiency across mathematics, science, career and technical education (CTE), and social studies, earning credit in multiple disciplines through a single, integrated learning experience.

b. Certification and Credit

- Only certified content-area teachers may award proficiency-based credit in their discipline (e.g., although a teacher or para certified in any way can *work with* any student, only a high-school certified math teacher confers high school math credit).
- This maintains alignment with state licensure standards while supporting interdisciplinary instruction.

c. Benchmark and Formative Assessment

- Early Warning System (EWS) score will constitute the overarching measure of likelihood of student success
- Benchmark assessments using valid, reliable screening tools will verify and refine (EWS) data.
- Formative assessments—including check-ins, reflections, and progress reviews—will guide instructional adjustments.

d. Summative Assessment

Pathways students will participate in state-mandated assessments, including:

- *Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST)*
- *Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)*, as applicable
- *WIDA Screener and ACCESS*, as applicable
- *ACT with Writing*
- *Montana Science Assessment (MSA)*

4. What Do We Do If Students Do Not Know or Cannot Do It?

For younger learners (K–6), MTSS frameworks emphasize tiered content-area interventions. However, as MTSS researcher Dr. Tessie Rose Bailey notes, by grade 7, traditional interventions diminish in efficacy for persistent non-responders. At that stage, alternate pathways—such as Park Pathways—become the most effective MTSS strategy. While also a Tier I instructional environment, the Pathways model itself can serve as a Tier III MTSS

intervention, providing a customized environment for re-engagement and growth. Additional targeted interventions may be provided as needed, using evidence-based programs (e.g., SuccessMaker). Moreover, Pathways will focus on providing students with tools and strategies to support their success moving forward, despite possible specific skills deficits (e.g., reading comprehension strategies).

5. What Do We Do If Students Already Know and Can Do It?

When a student demonstrates mastery:

- Credit or proficiency is awarded immediately and documented in the portfolio.
- The student then progresses to the next level of complexity or challenge.

Because project-based learning offers no fixed ceiling, advanced students are consistently challenged to deepen inquiry, expand scope, and connect learning to authentic contexts—ensuring continuous growth and engagement for every learner.

Annual Student Achievement Assessment

While the Pathways model emphasizes flexibility and student choice, it does so within a framework of academic rigor and accountability. The rubric-based system for portfolio assessment ensures that credit is earned through demonstrated performance and proficiency, not through lenient or compensatory grading practices. Each rubric defines “what it sounds like and looks like” for a student to meet or exceed state standards, thereby upholding validity and rigor in assessment.

This performance-based portfolio model allows students to demonstrate their learning through diverse, authentic means—such as applied projects, inquiry investigations, and community-based work—while maintaining fidelity to Montana Content Standards and employability competencies. As a result, students enrolled at Pathways are expected to show increased credit attainment, stronger engagement, and higher graduation rates compared to peers with similar profiles in traditional settings.

Annual Review and Growth Monitoring

- At the end of each semester, student portfolios (which include project artifacts, project-based and/or work-based reflections, assessments, self-/peer-assessments, academic data) will be presented to teaching staff, parents, and community partners.
 - Growth analysis is conducted: for example, comparing beginning-of-year benchmark to end-of-year (or comparing year-to-year for returning students) in academic and employability/technical metrics.
 - For students with IEPs/504/EL plans, the review includes progress toward individualized goals and accommodations effectiveness.
5. Describe any variances to existing standards that the public charter school requires to enhance educational opportunities.

Park Pathways School requests to waive the following:

1. ARM 10.55.710, School Counselor minimum requirements
2. ARM 10.55.709, Librarian minimum requirements
3. ARM 10.55.705, Administrator minimum requirements

All Pathways students will have access to district personnel (e.g., librarian, counselor) at both Sleeping Giant Middle School and Park High School.

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

This question is largely handled in the comprehensive response to question #2 and is summarized with some important additions here.

Students at Pathways will be paired with one or more Learning Pathway Advisors who will provide individualized instruction and customized learning support. The program is designed to offer a flexible, project-based, and work-based learning environment in which students may spend part of their day engaged in direct instruction or classroom learning, and other portions dedicated to independent projects or community-based work experiences.

Each student will develop an individualized Pathway Plan—a personalized learning plan that integrates their interests with grade-level content standards. These plans will be collaboratively designed by the student, their Learning Pathway Advisor, and their family, with input from community partners such as work-based learning supervisors. During the first five years of operation, the program anticipates maintaining an approximate 12-18 to 1 student-to-advisor ratio, ensuring meaningful, individualized support.

At Pathways, the concept of curriculum is understood in multiple dimensions: the *taught curriculum*, the *supported curriculum*, and—most importantly—the *learned curriculum*. Curriculum is defined as the essential understandings that students are expected to master, including Montana standards for grades 7–12 as well as community-based learning objectives. Although students may not all use the same textbooks or follow identical instructional sequences, each will demonstrate proficiency through performance-based assessments, confirming mastery of the defined learning objectives.

Distinct from the traditional six- to eight-period schedule common in most U.S. schools, Pathways will provide students with broad flexibility in their daily structure. There may be no fixed schedule; rather, each student will work with their Learning Pathway Advisor to design a plan that aligns with their goals and commitments. The guiding principle is that students are motivated by engagement and purpose—driven by what they *want* to accomplish, not merely by what they *have* to do.

The school will also leverage emerging learning technologies, including large learning models and generative artificial intelligence (AI), as tools for expanding inquiry and idea generation. For example, a student interested in ranching could use AI to develop a year-long, interdisciplinary course of study that explores the ranching industry while addressing all required state standards in mathematics, science, English, social studies, health and physical education, art, and career and technical education. Used in this way, AI can help generate ideas for hands-on, place-based, project-based learning experiences that extend beyond the digital environment.

While Pathways recognizes the proven value of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), it also acknowledges that some students struggle to engage with traditional methods. In such cases, teacher-, student-, and even AI-generated materials may provide a more responsive and relevant alternative. Though the effectiveness of AI-created materials is still emerging, the Pathways model prioritizes student engagement, relevance, and mastery over convention. For students who are disengaged or at risk of leaving school, this approach may offer a pathway not only to graduation but to deeper learning and long-term success.

Ultimately, Pathways is research-informed, data-aware, and innovation-driven. While its model represents a new approach—one that integrates flexibility, personalization, and proficiency-based assessment—it is designed to be a worthwhile and necessary innovation that provides students with an alternative route to graduation and post-secondary achievement.

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

Our instructional plan integrates project-based and work-based learning to ensure all students — including those with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), academically challenged, and gifted students — have equitable access to meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that comply with federal and state regulations (IDEA, ADA, Section 504, and Title VI).

Students with Disabilities:

- Identification follows IDEA and Section 504 guidelines, including evaluation, documentation, and development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans.
- Project-based and work-based projects are adapted to meet each student's IEP goals and accommodations (e.g., modified roles, assistive technology, flexible timelines).
- Collaboration between general education, special education, and work-based education staff ensures compliance and consistency.

English Language Learners (ELLs):

- Students are screened using state-approved language proficiency assessments (WIDA Screener and ACCESS).
- Project-based and work-based learning units include language scaffolding, visual supports, and collaborative groupings that promote language acquisition in authentic, applied contexts.
- Compliance with Title VI, ESSA, and all state statutes ensures ELLs receive appropriate instructional and language supports.

Academically Challenged Students:

- Identified through ongoing assessment and teacher observation during projects.
- Students receive targeted interventions such as additional coaching, peer mentoring, and task breakdown.
- Projects are differentiated so every student can demonstrate mastery through multiple means (visual, oral, written, or performance-based).

Gifted Students:

- Identified through performance data, teacher nomination, and portfolio evidence.
- Offered advanced project roles, opportunities for independent inquiry, mentorships with industry partners, and extended challenges within the project-based and/or work-based learning environment.
- Compliance with state-gifted education guidelines is maintained through documentation of enrichment and acceleration options.

7. Describe student discipline policies, including those for special education students.

All disciplinary procedures and responses will adhere to the overarching policies and guidelines set forth by the current school board. These policies serve as the foundational structure ensuring equity, legal compliance, and consistency across all schools within the district, including charter schools.

Within this framework, the day-to-day management of student behavior infractions will be the responsibility of the charter school leadership team. School administrators and designated staff will address behavioral incidents

promptly and effectively, following district-approved protocols while incorporating the charter school's unique educational model and philosophy.

While the charter school remains fully compliant with district discipline codes and reporting requirements, it will also utilize its flexibility to implement restorative practices, positive behavior interventions, and other supportive strategies tailored to its student population. These strategies will be aligned with the school's mission to foster a safe, inclusive, and student-centered learning environment.

The charter school's approach may include:

- Restorative justice practices to repair harm and restore relationships
- Social-emotional learning (SEL) supports and counseling services
- Tiered behavioral interventions adapted to individual student needs
- Staff training focused on trauma-informed practices and de-escalation
- Collaboration with families to develop individualized support plans when appropriate

This balanced approach ensures that student discipline is administered fairly and consistently while also honoring the charter's commitment to flexibility, innovation, and student growth.

Specific board policies listed below:

[Policy 3310: Student Discipline](#)

[Form 3310-F\(1\): Student Discipline - Discipline of Students with Disabilities](#)

8. Describe how the public charter school will demonstrate a commitment to and robust understanding of personalized and proficiency-based learning.

The public charter school is deeply committed to creating a learning environment that prioritizes personalized and proficiency-based education, ensuring that each student progresses according to their individual strengths, needs, and interests rather than through traditional seat-time requirements.

Assessment will be portfolio- and rubric-based, allowing students to demonstrate mastery of content through multiple forms of evidence, including projects, written work, performance tasks, and real-world applications. These portfolios will provide a comprehensive picture of each student's growth and proficiency over time.

Instruction will be scaffolded to meet students where they are and support their advancement toward mastery. The Learning Pathway Advisor will collaborate with students to design pathways plans, ensuring that instruction is appropriately challenging and aligned with personal goals and content standards.

The school will establish partnerships with local businesses and organizations to provide authentic, work-based learning experiences. These partnerships will offer students valuable opportunities to apply academic standards in practical settings and receive meaningful feedback from community partners.

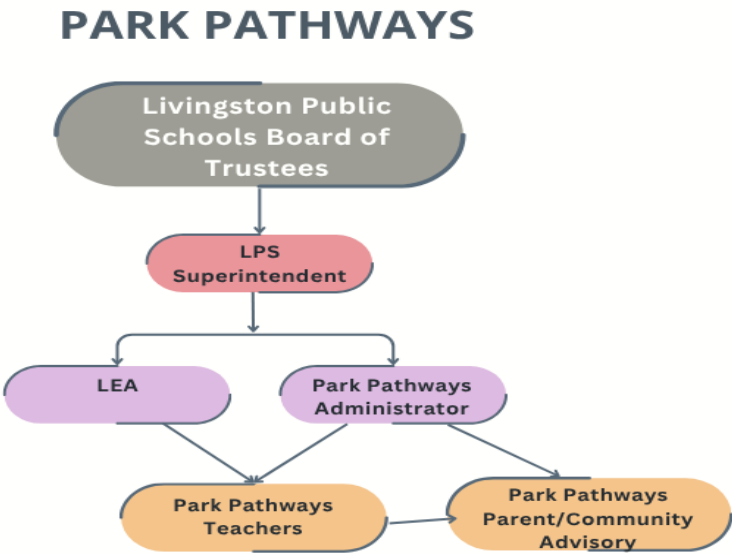
A strong emphasis will be placed on formative assessment, allowing teachers and students to continuously reflect on progress and adjust learning plans accordingly.

Consistent with state law and LPS board policy, seat time will not be a requirement for earning credit. Instead, credit will be awarded based on demonstrated proficiency and the successful completion of content standards. This approach ensures that learning is student-centered, mastery-driven, and connected to real-world experiences, preparing all learners for success beyond high school.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

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

Park Pathways School will exist under the Livingston Public Schools Board of Education and be supervised by its superintendent. Park Pathways will then have a principal or director oversee its daily operations and who will report to the superintendent. The teachers of Park Pathways will report to the principal/director and will also operate within the already existing union, Livingston Education Association (LEA). A Parent/Community Advisory Committee will be formed consisting of parents/guardians of enrolled students as well as teacher representation. This committee will meet at least once per semester to provide feedback, informed decision making, and ensure that family perspectives are included in school governance and planning.



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

The School Board will serve as the governing body, responsible for setting the overall strategic direction and policies of Park Pathways School. To ensure effective day-to-day operations, a principal/director will be appointed. The principal/director will play a key role in the school's administration, overseeing the daily operations and overall functioning of Park Pathways School. The Superintendent, the Director of Student Services and the Curriculum Director will work together with the Administration of Park Pathways, Sleeping Giant Middle School and Park High School to ensure that students who attend schools in any or multiple of these locations are meeting all procedures, policies and programming lined out by the board of trustees.

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

The Park Pathways School will be staffed by teachers certified through the Montana Office of Public Instruction. We understand that the students in the school would benefit from smaller sizes. This will be a goal as we staff the school for not only the first year, but also subsequent school years as well.

Staff	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year	5 th Year
Teachers	4.0 FTE	4.0 FTE	4.0 FTE	5.0 FTE	6.0 FTE
Admin/Counselor/SPED	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE
WBL/Transformational/Para	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE
Custodian/Para	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE	1.0 FTE

*Existing Livingston Public Schools’ special education staff (special education teachers, school psychologist, occupational therapists, and speech language pathologists) will provide services on a case-by-case basis.

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

Pending acceptance of the charter application by the district, the charter school will implement a structured startup plan to ensure operational readiness for opening. The plan outlines essential tasks, estimated timelines, and responsible individuals or roles for each major milestone.

A. Securing a Location

Timeline: Months 1–2 (Immediately upon application approval)

Responsible Individual(s): Superintendent, Charter Leadership Team

The district, in partnership with charter leadership, will identify and secure a suitable facility that meets safety, accessibility, and instructional space requirements. Site inspections and necessary renovations will be conducted in this phase to ensure timely readiness.

B. Hiring School Leadership

Timeline: Months 1–2

Responsible Individual(s): Superintendent, HR

A principal or school director will be hired to oversee all operational, academic, and compliance functions. This leader will play a critical role in hiring staff, finalizing school systems and instruction, and aligning with district expectations.

C. Hiring Teaching and Support Staff

Timeline: Months 3–4

Responsible Individual(s): School Admin/Director, HR

Certified teachers and support personnel will be recruited and onboarded. Hiring will prioritize alignment with the charter's instructional vision, commitment to equity, and student-centered approaches.

D. Processing Student Applications

Timeline: Months 3–6

Responsible Individual(s): School Admin/Director, Teaching Staff

Marketing and community outreach efforts will support student recruitment. Applications will be processed using the enrollment procedures described in question #3. Families will receive orientation and onboarding materials.

E. Finalizing School Calendar and Daily Schedule

Timeline: Months 4–5

Responsible Individual(s): School Admin/Director, Teaching Staff

The school will develop a calendar that aligns with the larger district while supporting the charter's instructional goals. The daily schedule will include adequate time for direct instruction, work-based/project-based learning, meeting and advisory with their Learning Pathway Advisor.

F. Acquiring and Developing Curriculum and Grading System

Timeline: Months 4–6

Responsible Individual(s): School Admin/Director, Teaching Staff, Curriculum Director

Teaching staff along with the district Curriculum Director, school counselors and Pathway's school administration will work together to develop a standards catalog and map for grades 7-12. Teaching staff will begin meeting with accepted students and their families to develop pathway plans and to identify necessary direct instruction and work- and/or project-based learning opportunities. Additionally, this team will work on developing a standards-based/proficiency-based grading system that will be used to assess students' portfolio presentations.

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

Pending approval of the application, the district will post a position for an administrator with a strong background in community and organizational collaboration, effective communication with parents, and the development and implementation of project-based and work-based instructional models. The candidate should also have experience in providing social-emotional and behavioral supports, demonstrate innovative leadership, and be knowledgeable in alternative assessment practices that support student growth and success. Current administrators and staff (with appropriate certifications) within the district would be welcome to be applicants.

Pending approval of the application, the district will post positions for certified 7–12 teaching staff who demonstrate a strong background in project-based and work-based learning. Candidates with multiple content area certifications are highly desired. Ideal applicants will exhibit creative and flexible thinking, strong problem-solving skills, and the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with both students and families. Teachers will be expected to design rigorous, proficiency-based learning plans that integrate multiple content domains, incorporate alternative assessments, and reflect real-world relevance. Additionally, candidates should be prepared to engage with the broader community and work flexible schedules in order to meet the diverse needs of students.

Additionally, both the hired administrator and teaching staff will receive relevant training and engage in interdisciplinary curriculum development to support the program's mission. The team will also participate in reviewing and accepting student applications, begin building strong community partnerships, and connect with families and students prior to the start of the school year. Staff and leadership will collaborate on developing both the school year calendar and a flexible school day schedule to best meet the diverse needs of students. As part of extensive professional preparation, staff may also visit other alternative education programs across the state of Montana to gain insights and best practices that can inform program development and implementation.

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

We will adhere to all current employment policies in place at Livingston Public Schools. Employee evaluations will follow the same procedures currently in use. Any staff scheduling flexibilities will be negotiated with the local units of the Montana Federation of Public Employees.

15. State the proposed governing bylaws.

Park Pathways School will follow the policies and procedures of Livingston Public Schools. The Board of Trustees will adopt any additional policies necessary to maximize the effectiveness and impact of Park Pathways School.

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

Both Park Pathways School and Livingston Public Schools emphasize the importance of community partnerships in their mission and vision statements, recognizing their critical role in helping students develop the skills necessary for successful post-secondary outcomes. Park Pathways School is committed to maintaining and expanding the strong network of community partnerships already established through Livingston Public Schools. These partnerships—including the Community School Collaborative, Livingston HealthCare, L'esprit, and Park County Youth Court Services—not only enrich students' educational experiences but also provide access to essential services already available within the district. In addition, these partnerships have the opportunity to offer students meaningful work-based and project-based learning opportunities that support real-world readiness after graduation.

17. Provide the proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.

The program will follow the standard Livingston Public Schools academic calendar, including all district holidays, breaks, and professional development days. A standard school day will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., providing a flexible framework for student learning and engagement. Eventually, the district would like to explore extended school hours (e.g., evening hours) in order to best accommodate student needs. Within this structure, each student's individual schedule will be developed collaboratively with their Learning Pathway Advisor to meet their unique learning goals, interests, and progress toward proficiency-based standards. Moreover, students may complete content standards in any order (e.g., Focus on completing math content standards within the first year) that are aligned with a concurrent project or work-based learning opportunity.

Because seat time is not a requirement for credit, students may spend varying amounts of time on campus depending on their learning plans. Proficiency will be the basis for awarding credit in accordance with state law and LPS board policy. Time outside the traditional classroom may include project-based learning, internships, or work-based learning experiences aligned with academic and career goals. This flexible calendar and daily schedule model supports personalized, proficiency-based learning, allowing students to progress at their own pace and connect academic content with real-world applications. Students may also choose to enroll in courses offered at Park High School or Sleeping Giant Middle School to expand their learning opportunities (e.g., band, choir).

[Sample Daily Schedule](#)

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

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

Park Pathways students will receive all educational and support services equivalent to those provided to students at Sleeping Giant Middle School and Park High School. The Park Pathways facility is located on the same campus as these schools, allowing for seamless integration of services. Transportation and food services will be coordinated through Park High School, which is within walking distance. All other operational, maintenance, and ancillary services will also be provided using existing district staff and resources to ensure consistency, efficiency, and equity across all programs.

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

Park Pathways students will be welcomed and encouraged to participate in any cocurricular and extracurricular activities and programs provided by Sleeping Giant Middle School and Park High School. These activities will be funded through the typical sources the established programs already are.

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

The financial plan is outlined in the proposed 5-year budget as submitted later in this application. The Districts' general funds and other budgeted funds, as well as the interlocal fund, may/will be used to support Park Pathways School, all under what is allowable by law and appropriate accounting guidelines. Regarding policies and financial controls, Park Pathways School will be under the guidelines of the remainder of the District. Audits as necessary and all policies required under current law will be included.

21. Describe the insurance coverage that will be obtained.

Our current carrier has been noticed to include the potential of a building acquisition, if successful, to our current P & L policy. They have also been included in the discussion of work-based learning opportunities for Park Pathways students, which is currently in the plan. The additional coverage will be in addition to, but under our current coverage.

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

District administration will collaborate with business office staff to execute the necessary start up planning. This planning team will report to the school board and community regularly and accept input and public comment. Budgetary considerations will be met by current general fund allocations for salaries and benefits for district employees involved in the planning. Any additional ancillary or supply costs (which will be minimal) can be borne by district funds set aside in an interlocal agreement for this purpose.

The budget projections below reflect anticipated general fund increases in base aid as well as some ANB funding the district will allocate to the new school as enrollment grows. We anticipate the initial Park Pathways School students will be approximately 50/50 students already enrolled in the LPS system and those that are not. As enrollment grows with programmatic development, we will shift some resources appropriately to/from the current system to create a Park Pathways School self-sustaining system. Compensation rates are based on current district pay rates.

[Budget Document](#)

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

The startup and first-year cash flow will be under the direction of the host Districts, both the elementary and the high school. This does require an initial investment on behalf of the districts (please see the budget above). This may include the general fund budgets, other budgeted funds and/or our fund 182 (interlocal).

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

At this time, we do not have any ongoing fundraising commitments. However, the district has been quite successful as a beneficiary of the Income Tax Credit program, and we expect to promote the program ten-fold in support of Park Pathways School. We have solid relationships with community partners as listed throughout this application.

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

At this time, Park Pathways School does not have the dedicated space to house our program. We are currently investigating several options; 1) the currently District-owned, but closed Washington School which closed three years ago due to budget cuts and needed facility replacement and repairs (this quite honestly is our last/poorest option due to cost of repairs, location and lack of vision support. 2) The recently vacated Enterprise (local paper office/warehouse). We are currently in discussions with the owner of the Enterprise to convey our vision of the

Park Pathways School and ultimately provide a proposal for use of the building; this includes outright purchase of the property which will require voter approval or potential lease to own over the first 1-5 years. 3) Other local vacant buildings in town, such as a vacated dentist office, vacated business on main street and others that may exist. This currently is our number one priority during the review cycle of the application by the Montana Board of Public Education.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEED

26. Describe the specific evidence of significant community support.

Park Pathways School has received broad and meaningful support from a diverse range of community stakeholders. To elicit feedback from all stakeholders, we created a Community Outreach Committee consisting of the following individuals: Veronica Collins (Parent), Cortnee Stipp (Parent), Sarah Dahl (Livingston Public Schools Tech Integration Specialist), Cindy Daniels (Youth Probation Officer), Carolyn Dettori (Community Stakeholder), Cole Maxwell (Principal of Park High School), and Anne Penn Cox (Director of Student Support & Early Learning Coordinator).

We are committed to designing a school that responds directly to identified local needs, and the evidence below gathered by our Community Outreach Committee demonstrates that our community not only recognizes those needs but is also invested in helping to address them through this new school option. We have created a document outlining all of our efforts thus far which demonstrates evidence of significant community support. Below is a summary of our community outreach activities.

[Community Outreach Summary Document](#)

Letters of Support

We have collected formal letters of endorsement from:

- Parents and families across the district as well as those currently choosing other education options outside the district
- Current employees of the Livingston School District
- Park County Superintendent of Schools
- Local employers seeking to strengthen the workforce pipeline
- Community stakeholders

These letters represent broad cross-sector support, showing that families, educators, businesses, and community stakeholders see value in Park Pathways to fill unmet needs for students.

[Letters of Support Document](#)

Community Survey

Last spring, Livingston School District administered a community survey to learn more about what our parents, employees, and community members would like to see with respect to learning programs as well as instructional areas of focus. Results indicate strong interest in additional educational options, with families consistently expressing a need for more flexible and supportive pathways for student success.

Community Nights & Focus Groups

As part of the district's ongoing commitment to inclusive and transparent planning, a series of structured engagement opportunities were conducted to gather community input regarding the development of the Pathways

School. These efforts were designed to ensure that the perspectives of key stakeholders—including community members, families, and staff—inform the vision and planning process.

Community engagement activities included two community nights and three focus groups. The first was held on October 8th during the regularly scheduled October School Board meeting. An additional community night was held on October 21st at a community event center.

In addition to these community nights, three focused discussion groups were conducted throughout the fall. The focus groups utilized a fishbowl discussion framework, which allowed for dynamic dialogue among participants while providing observers an opportunity to listen and reflect, followed by a question-and-answer session to further explore emerging themes.

Community Focus Group – September 25th

Participants represented a broad cross-section of local organizations, including community service providers, health care professionals, law enforcement, local government, education representatives, and business leaders. Organizational representation included, but was not limited to:

- ASPEN
- Montana Chamber of Commerce
- Arrows Behavior Academy
- Livingston Police Department
- Community Health Partners
- LiveWell49
- Local legislative offices
- Livingston HealthCare
- Park County Superintendent's Office
- Ministerial Association
- City of Livingston

Parent/Guardian Focus Group – October 1st

The parent and guardian focus group included families representing a range of educational perspectives—those whose children have attended public schools for their entire education, as well as families who have chosen homeschool and private school options.

Livingston Public School District Staff Focus Group – October 13th

A staff focus group was conducted to gather perspectives regarding the proposed public charter school application. Participants represented our elementary, middle, and high schools, and included both certified teaching participants as well as a classified employee. Staff shared insights related to instructional practices, student needs, and potential impacts of the proposed charter model.

Analysis of Focus Groups

An analysis of all focus groups highlights shared priorities across stakeholders, organized into seven themes and framed through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) lens. Adding staff insights grounds community vision in classroom realities, emphasizing practical needs for implementation, instruction, and staffing. Common themes that emerged in all focus groups included:

- Personalized and Flexible Learning
- Small Class Sizes & Relationships
- Neurodiversity, SEL, & Regulation
- Career & Community Connections
- Teacher Preparation & Sustainability

- Funding and Equity Concerns
- Culture of Connection & Belonging

Collectively, the input gathered through these engagement opportunities reflects a strong community interest in innovative, student-centered approaches to education. These insights will serve as an important foundation for continued planning and development of the Pathways School, ensuring alignment with community values and the district's mission to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Student Enrollment Trends

- *Homeschool Population:* Our area has a notable number of families opting out of the public school system altogether, suggesting that existing public school models are not meeting all needs. Currently, we have approximately 120 homeschooled students registered with our County Superintendent. Park Pathways can provide a public alternative that bridges the gap between traditional and home-based education for those who choose.
- *Withdrawal/Dropout Data:* Local trends indicate concerning withdrawal patterns. Park Pathways aims to directly address these challenges by offering a personalized and flexible environment that better retains students and supports graduation.

Acknowledging Remaining Gaps

While Park Pathways will not singlehandedly address every educational challenge in our region, it is designed to fill some of the most pressing gaps identified by families, educators, and employers. The strong support from across the community reflects a shared belief that this school will serve as an essential new option for students who need a different pathway to success.

27. Describe the opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.

Park Pathways School values families as essential partners in student learning. We also recognize that not all families have the same capacity, time, or resources to engage at the same level. Our goal is to provide multiple, flexible opportunities for involvement that honor diverse circumstances while ensuring every parent/guardian has a voice in shaping our school community.

Opportunities for Involvement

- **Open Family Resource Space:** Families will be welcomed into a school building with an open, comfortable space where they can access resources, connect with staff, or simply come in to enjoy a cup of coffee and feel part of the school community.
- **Advisory Committee:** Parents and community members will be invited to serve on a parent/community advisory committee, which will provide feedback, inform decision-making, and ensure that family perspectives are included in school governance and planning. This committee will meet at least once per semester.
- **Volunteering & School Events:** Families will have opportunities to engage through classroom support, project-based learning activities, school events, and community partnerships. Participation will be designed to accommodate a variety of schedules and commitments.

Expectations for Involvement

While involvement may look different for each family, we expect that all parents/guardians will:

- Actively participate in at least two meetings per year focused on their child's individualized Pathway Plan. Additional family conferences and communication are encouraged.
- Maintain ongoing communication with teachers and staff.
- Support their child's attendance, engagement, and academic growth.
- Participate in family surveys and feedback opportunities to help guide continuous school improvement.

We are intentional about creating a culture where family voice matters. At the same time, we will not limit student access or opportunity based on parent/guardian capacity to participate. Every student deserves the full benefit of Park Pathways regardless of family circumstances, and our structures ensure equity in both expectations and opportunities.