

# CHAPTER 55, STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION: WHAT CHANGED?

EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE  
PAD MCCrackEN - SEPTEMBER 2023

## CHAPTER 55 CHANGES AS OF JULY 1, 2023

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### INTRODUCTION

The Office of Public Instruction and the Board of Public Education just completed a multi-year effort to revise Chapter 55 of Title 10 of the Administrative Rules of Montana. Chapter 55 contains the standards of accreditation, detailing the requirements for schools in Montana to be accredited. The headlines and public comment on these changes were largely focused on proposed changes to staffing ratios for school counselors, librarians, and administrators, changes that were ultimately NOT adopted by the Board of Public Education. But the changes that were adopted and that became effective July 1, 2023, are significant updates to the accreditation standards. This document attempts to summarize those changes.

Note: the underlining in this document is intended to highlight the changes most closely associated with proficiency-based education, personalized learning, and a learner-centered education model.

### NUTSHELL ON SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

- Emphasizes move towards a "learner-centered system" (though learner-centered system is not defined)
- Enhances family and community engagement
- Increases focus on assessing proficiency and growth
- Provides both increased accountability for instructional personnel through written evaluations and increased support for new teachers through mentorship and induction
- All of the above and more is to be part of a district's "integrated strategic action plan" (ISAP) that replaces current "continuous school improvement plan"
- Expands the basic instructional program for high schools and the graduation requirements to include new requirements for 1/2 unit [semester equivalent] of civics or government within 3-unit social studies requirement and 1/2 unit of economics or financial literacy within existing social studies, math, or CTE requirements

## NEW RULES

1. 10.55.608 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION – existing charter school language relocated from "Variance to Standards" rule in ARM 10.55.604 to a new rule section
2. 10.55.722 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – each board of trustees adopts a family engagement plan aimed at enhancing student learning, expanding educational opportunities, and preparing students for postsecondary education and workforce
3. 10.55.723 MENTORSHIP AND INDUCTION – provides more description of mentorship and induction program each board is currently required to establish
4. 10.55.724 EVALUATION – requires written evaluations of all instructional personnel, employee access to the evaluation instrument, and OPI guidance for districts regarding evaluation instruments
5. 10.55.806 ENGLISH LEARNERS – requires districts to identify and serve English learners

## REVISED RULES

1. 10.55.601 ACCREDITATION STANDARDS: PROCEDURES –
  - a. "to ensure a learner-centered system"; "integrated strategic action plan" replaces "continuous school improvement plan";
  - b. plan is updated at least every 3 years based on needs assessment with meaningful stakeholder input;
  - c. plan components include a graduate profile, educational goals, a professional development component, and a description of strategies to serve gifted and talented, children with disabilities, English learners, and at-risk students
2. 10.55.602 DEFINITIONS – revises multiple existing definitions; eliminates the following existing definitions: "Class 8 license"; "Combined elementary-high school district"; "Independent elementary school district"; "Indian Education for All"; "K-12 district"; "Minimum aggregate hours"; "Misassignment"; "Online learning"; and creates the following new definitions:
  - a. "Charter school" means a publicly funded school that may be exempt from an assurance standard or a section of assurance standards as defined in ARM 10.55.602(3). A charter school operates under the supervision and control of an existing locally elected board of trustees in an existing public school district.
  - b. "Class 6 specialist" means a person with a Class 6 specialist license in a nonteaching role of school psychologist or school counselor.
  - c. "Community engagement" means the partnership between members of the community and schools that may share resources and volunteer to support student well-being and learning development.
  - d. "Comprehensive needs assessment" means a process that is used to identify district and school area(s) of need, the root causes of identified gaps, set priorities, and inform an action plan for improvement.
  - e. "Family engagement" means a partnership with shared responsibility among families, educational staff, and community groups to promote each student's learning, well-being, and development of full educational potential during their entire K-12 experience.
  - f. "Graduate profile" means a learner centered model(s) based on a shared vision of learner attributes that students should have when they graduate.
  - g. "Graduation rate" means a calculation based on the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate for all

students and for each student group.

- h. "Integrated strategic action plan" means a district plan adopted by the board of trustees that:
  - i. is aligned with the peoples' goal in Article X, section 1 of the Montana Constitution of developing the full educational potential of each person;
  - ii. ensures a learner-centered system and continuous improvement that reflects local context and needs;
  - iii. is based on school level comprehensive needs assessment;
  - iv. has engaged stakeholders and addresses stakeholder input and feedback; and
  - v. aligns with requirements of applicable state and federal programs.
- i. "Learning model" means the learning experiences student engage in and teachers facilitate that are aligned to the desired attributes of a graduate profile.
- j. "Literacy" means constructing and validating knowledge in specific content areas which includes interpretation and learning with language, numeracy, and media. (revises existing definition)
- k. "Measure" means a way to assess the level of proficiency on a performance indicator aligned to the district graduate profile.
- l. "Personalized learning" means to:
  - i. develop individualized pathways for career and postsecondary educational opportunities that honor individual interests, passions, strengths, needs, and culture;
  - ii. support the student through the development of relationships among teachers, family, peers, the business community, postsecondary education officials, public entities, and other community stakeholders;
  - iii. embed community-based, experiential, online, and work-based learning opportunities; and
  - iv. foster a learning environment that incorporates both face-to-face and virtual connections.
- m. "Professional development" means adult learning that increases educator effectiveness and learning outcomes for all students.
- n. "Proficiency-based learning" means systems of instruction, assessment, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills as outlined in the state content standards.
- o. "Proficient" means that a student demonstrated a level of knowledge and skills that are expected to be learned signaling that a student is well prepared to progress on the learning continuum aligned to the content standards, learning progressions, and necessary readiness skills.
- p. "Pupil instruction" is as defined in 20-1-101, MCA.
- q. "Stakeholders" means community members who may be involved and invested in districts, schools, programs, and outcomes for students. Stakeholders include students, families, educators, leaders, business and community leaders, taxpayers, and the many partners who support them.
- r. "Student growth" means changes in student learning as measured from one point in time to another as determined by state or local measures, or both. The federal accountability system uses a growth model to demonstrate student learning across time as measured by statewide assessments.

### 3. 10.55.603 CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT –

- a. Requires implementation of a "proficiency-based learning model" and assessment of "students' progression, growth, and proficiency"
- b. Replaces "continuous school improvement plan" with "integrated strategic action plan"
- c. Replaces "grade-level learning progressions" with "grade-level or grade-band learning progressions"

4. 10.55.604 VARIANCES TO STANDARDS –
  - a. Limits allowable variances to assurance standards; no variances for performance standards
  - b. Revises application timeline so that variances for the current academic year can be sought up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in October
  - c. Revises composition of variance review board and eliminates section on review board seeking expert advice
  - d. Removes entire charter school section which is relocated to new rule
5. 10.55.605 CATEGORIES OF ACCREDITATION – this rule ultimately was not substantively changed from its current form
6. 10.55.606 ACCREDITATION PROCESS – this rule ultimately was not substantively changed from its current form
7. 10.55.701 BOARD OF TRUSTEES – removes a long list of policies that boards are required to adopt
8. 10.55.704 ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL: ASSIGNMENT OF DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS – this rule ultimately was not substantively changed from its current form
9. 10.55.705 ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL: ASSIGNMENT OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS/PRINCIPALS – this rule ultimately was not substantively changed from its current form
10. 10.55.706 TEACHER INVOLVEMENT – slightly revised to emphasize utilization of measures of student growth and proficiency
11. 10.55.708 TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS – this rule ultimately was not substantively changed from its current form
12. 10.55.709 LIBRARY MEDIA SERVICES, K-12 – this rule ultimately was not substantively changed from its current form
13. 10.55.710 ASSIGNMENT OF SCHOOL COUNSELING STAFF – this rule ultimately was not substantively changed from its current form
14. 10.55.712 CLASS SIZE: ELEMENTARY – maintains existing class size limits and requirements for additional "qualified human resources" when those limits are exceeded; requires these "qualified human resources" to pass background checks; prohibits an overload of six or more students
15. 10.55.714 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – revisions emphasize: goals outlined in "graduate profile"; student and staff safety, well-being, and mental health; teacher reflection and collaboration; alignment with district integrated strategic action plan
16. 10.55.716 SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS – strengthens background checks for substitute teachers

17. 10.55.717 ASSIGNMENT OF PERSONS PROVIDING INSTRUCTION TO BRAILLE STUDENTS – updates qualifications of Braille instructors
18. 10.55.801 SCHOOL CLIMATE – updates to reference Montana Constitution related to "Individual dignity" and federal law; new requirement for districts to measure school climate
19. 10.55.802 OPPORTUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY – similar references as above
20. 10.55.803 LEARNER ACCESS – revised to further emphasize personalized learning and student engagement/self-direction
21. 10.55.901 BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM: ELEMENTARY – program must include recognition of "the distinct and unique cultural heritages of American Indians"; instruction in reading and writing literacy must be incorporated throughout curriculum
22. 10.55.902 BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM: MIDDLE GRADES – same changes as above, plus clarifications to requirements to be accredited as "middle school program"
23. 10.55.904 BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM OFFERINGS: HIGH SCHOOL – same recognition of "the distinct and unique cultural heritages of American Indians"; new requirements for 1/2 unit [semester equivalent] of civics or government within 3-unit social studies requirement and 1/2 unit of economics or financial literacy within existing social studies, math, or CTE requirements; renames "health enhancement" to "health and physical education"
24. 10.55.905 GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS – same new unit requirements as above; adds "Students may demonstrate achievement through a flexible system of pupil-centered learning." These new graduation requirements have a delayed effective date of July 1, 2025.
25. 10.55.906 HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT strengthens elimination of "seat-time" requirements by adding the underlined: A unit of credit is defined as the equivalent of at least 8100 minutes for one year, equivalent proficiency without regard to time, or demonstration of an equivalent course that meets the district's curriculum and assessment requirements, which are aligned with each of the content standards.