

BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

CHAPTER 63

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Subchapter 1

Preschool Education Standards

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Subchapter 1

Preschool Education Standards

10.63.101 PROCEDURES (1) The trustees of a school may establish a public preschool program to meet the unique developmental needs for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years. When preschool programs are established they must be an integral part of the public school and must be governed according to the following accreditation standards for the preschool 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, preschool programs will be assessed on the program's assurance standards only.

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

(3) Montana's preschool standards shall be reviewed and revised on a five-year cycle beginning July 1, 2017. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

(g) "Teacher" means a licensed individual as defined in ARM 10.55.602, with primary responsibility for a group or class of preschool students. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

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

(2) Professional development for preschool educators as required by ARM 10.55.714 should be tailored to early childhood development and learning. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

10.63.104 TEACHER ASSIGNMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

(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 Education Special Permissive Competency shall be considered to be appropriately licensed, endorsed, and assigned to teach in an accredited preschool program until July 1, 2018, at which time those teachers will need to be appropriately licensed and endorsed pursuant to ARM Title 10, chapter 57.

(3) All other teachers or individuals with background, training, or experience in early childhood that are interested in teaching in a public school preschool program may apply for a Class 5 provisional license pursuant to ARM 10.57.424, if they do not have the proper endorsement. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

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. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

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. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

10.63.107 CLASS SIZE (1) There must be one appropriately licensed and endorsed teacher for ten students, with an early childhood paraprofessional for any additional students over ten, for up to no more than 18 total students in a classroom with two adults.

(2) Class size of 18 preschoolers is the maximum number of students, regardless of the number of staff. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP: 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

10.63.108 AGGREGATE HOURS (1) Trustees may designate the preschool program as either a half-time or full-time program with a minimum of 540 hours. Outdoor play, snack, and meal time are included in the aggregate hours. Nap time and daily transportation to and from the classroom do not count as part of the 540 hour preschool program hours.

(2) The trustees of a school district shall set the number of days in the school term, the length of the school day, and the number of school days in a week. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15; AMD, 2015 MAR p. 1055, Eff. 7/31/15.)

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. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

10.63.110 EARLY LEARNING CONTENT STANDARDS DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS (1) The emotional and social domain requires instruction which incorporates and includes:

- (a) culture, family, and community, wherein students learn to develop:
 - (i) an awareness of and appreciation for similarities and differences between themselves and others;
 - (ii) an awareness of the functions and diverse characteristics of families; and
 - (iii) an understanding of the basic principles of how communities function, including work roles and commerce.
 - (b) emotional development wherein students:
 - (i) develop an awareness and appreciation of self as a unique, competent, and capable individual;
 - (ii) demonstrate a belief in their abilities;
 - (iii) manage internal states, feelings, and behavior, and develop the ability to adapt to diverse situations and environments; and
 - (iv) express a wide and varied range of feelings through facial expressions, gestures, behaviors, and words.
 - (c) social development which helps students:
 - (i) develop trust, emotional bonds, and interact comfortably with adults;
 - (ii) interact and build relationships with peers; and
 - (iii) develop skills in cooperation, negotiation, and empathy.
- (2) The physical domain requires development of motor skills and instruction in health, safety, and personal care.
- (a) Development of motor skills includes:
 - (i) small muscle strength, coordination, and skills;
 - (ii) large muscle strength, coordination, and skills; and
 - (iii) use of their senses to explore the environment and develop skills through sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound.
 - (b) Health, safety, and personal care standards for early childhood education are that students:
 - (i) develop personal health and hygiene skills as they develop and practice self-care routines;
 - (ii) eat a variety of nutritional foods and develop healthy eating practices;
 - (iii) develop healthy behaviors through physical activity; and
 - (iv) develop an awareness and understanding of safety rules as they learn to make safe and appropriate choices.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(4) The cognitive domain requires instruction which incorporates and includes:

(a) approaches to learning which help students develop:

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

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

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

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

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

(c) instruction in creative arts, including:

- (i) creative movement wherein students produce rhythmic movements spontaneously and in imitation with growing technical and artistic abilities;
- (ii) drama, wherein students show appreciation and awareness of drama through observation, imitation, and participation in simple dramatic plots;
- (iii) music, wherein students engage in a variety of musical or rhythmic activities; and
- (iv) visual arts, wherein students demonstrate a growing understanding and appreciation for the creative process and visual arts.

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

- (i) develop number sense and operations through the ability to think and work with numbers, to understand their uses, and describe their relationships through structured and everyday experiences;
- (ii) develop an awareness of measurement concepts through use of measurement instruments to explore and discover measurement relationships and characteristics, such as length, quantity, volume, distance, weight, area, and time;
- (iii) apply mathematical skills in data analysis, such as counting, sorting, and comparing objects;
- (iv) develop an awareness of initial algebraic thinking and operations through counting, sorting, and comparing objects; and
- (v) build the foundation for geometric and spatial reasoning through recognition, creation, and manipulation of shapes, and learning spatial reasoning and directional words as they become aware of their bodies and personal space in their physical environment.

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

- (i) engage in scientific thinking and the use of the scientific methods through investigation using their senses to observe, manipulate objects, ask questions, make predictions, and develop conclusions and generalizations;
- (ii) develop an understanding of and compassion for living things;
- (iii) develop an understanding of the physical world, the nature and properties of energy, and nonliving matter;
- (iv) develop an understanding of the earth and planets; and
- (v) develop an understanding of engineering as the process that assists people in designing and building.

(f) social studies for early childhood education are that students:

- (i) develop an understanding of the concept of historical time, including past, present, and future;
- (ii) develop knowledge of geographical places and regions by understanding that each place has its own unique characteristics and the reciprocal effect individuals have with the world around them;
- (iii) become aware of their natural world, including the environment and our interdependence on the natural world; and
- (iv) develop an understanding of technology with awareness of technological tools and developmentally appropriate exploration of the ways to use these resources. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

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

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

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

(c) guide the learning process and daily plans for learning through the selection of materials and equipment to enhance development and learning in each core domain, including emotional/social, physical, communication, and cognition; and encourage integration of early childhood content areas, including social, emotional, physical, health, safety, language, literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, creative expression and the arts, and technology;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(e) assessing the effectiveness of the instructional program that guides adjustments for improvement. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p.2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

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

(2) The preschool instructional program shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(h) work as a team to implement learning plans, including plans for students with special needs. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(iii) use of developmentally appropriate materials and equipment. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

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

- (a) use positive behavior supports to ensure the social, emotional, and cultural development of each student;
- (b) provide a positive climate to ensure equality, inclusion, and citizenship;
- (c) develop relationships with the student and the student's family in ways that are linguistically and culturally sensitive;
- (d) provide opportunities for students to be contributing members of the classroom community;
- (e) provide clear behavioral expectations, including the use of effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior; and
- (f) partner with families and other professionals for students with challenging behavior to develop and implement an individualized plan that fosters the child's inclusion and success. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)

10.63.115 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (1) The program staff shall establish and maintain collaborative relationships with each child's family and community to foster student's development in all settings.

- (2) To ensure collaborative relationships between the community, school, and families, preschool 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. (History: 20-7-101, MCA; IMP, 20-7-117, MCA; NEW, 2014 MAR p. 2943, Eff. 7/1/15.)