

**VARIANCES TO STANDARDS APPLICATION**  
**Renewal Application (three years)**

**Purpose:** ARM 10.55.604(4) "Following the second year of implementation of a variance to standards, the school district shall provide evidence to the Superintendent of Public Instruction that the methods selected by the district implement, meet, or exceed results that could have been achieved under established standards."

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**DUE DATE:**

First Monday in March

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**COUNTY:** Jefferson

**DISTRICT:** Whitehall School District 4, 47, & 2

**LIST EACH SCHOOL THAT IS REQUESTING THE VARIANCE:**

Whitehall Elementary School, Whitehall Middle School, Whitehall High School

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1. Standard(s) for which a variance is requested, e.g., 10.55.709. If there is a program delivery standard, be sure to list it as well, e.g., 10.55.1801.

10.55.709 Library Media Services, K-12

- 2. Provide evidence that local community stakeholders were involved in the consideration and development of the proposed renewal variance application. Community stakeholder groups include parents, community members, and students as applicable.**

We have a community partnership with the Whitehall Public Library through both the community component of the 21st Century program and the community component of the Montana Comprehensive Literary Development Project grant. We gathered input from the town librarian and she volunteered to help provide the .1 FTE we needed but she is not certified to do so per OPI Standards. She continues to support the schools literacy efforts through the 21st Century After School program. Due to COVID-19, no parent meetings have occurred this year.

- 3. Provide evidence local school stakeholders were involved in the consideration and development of the proposed renewal variance application. School stakeholder groups include trustees, administrators, teachers and classified school staff.**

The variance has been reviewed and discussed numerous times; it was discussed publicly in the superintendent's reports at the Whitehall School Board meeting in August 2020 and November 2020. It was an agenda item at the February 22, 2021 board meeting. It was discussed at district leadership team meetings, especially in the context of the Montana Literacy Development Project grant goals and objectives. It was discussed with the current librarian annually as we review and set his schedule.

4. Attach Board of Trustee meeting minutes that show the Board of Trustees approved the application for a renewal variance at an official, properly noticed meeting. *Minutes will be approved at March 9 meeting*

5. Reflection upon initial variance:

- a. Describe the specific measurable objectives that were listed in the initial variance application that demonstrated how the proposed variance was to meet or exceed the results under the current standard(s).

1. Continue to allow flexible scheduling to ensure that the library responds to information needs, fostering intellectual curiosity, and supporting learning. Measured by schedule and student contact time.
2. Continue to collaborate with teachers to gain understanding of content standards and will use Lexile levels, corresponding AR levels, and grade level content to enhance students reading and comprehension.
3. MAP reading data will be utilized to develop and purchase materials suitable for student body. These scores will also be utilized for long range planning to manage the human, financial, and physical resources needed for a successful library.
4. MTSS data will be utilized in the same manner as the MAP data.
5. Teacher Evaluation documents with measurable objectives will be utilized to ensure delivery of the desired curriculum based on the Library Media program standards.

- b. Provide a summary of the evidence or data gathered to demonstrate that the initial variance meets or exceeds results that could have been achieved under the established standard.

Data was gathered from NWEA MAP scores, Lexile scores, AR scores, and teacher Reading Mastery evaluation rubric scores. Classroom data was shared in regard to student comprehension and learning in our Walk-To-Read program and student grade level placement according to success in that program.


- c. **After reflection on the initial variance, describe any adjustments that need to be made to meet the specific needs of the students in the school(s).**

The district has drawn upon the expertise of the four licensed Reading Specialists in our school district to focus on district wide literacy goals. In addition, through the Montana Comprehensive Literacy Development grant, the district has hired an instructional consultant to focus on literacy content and instruction providing greater opportunity to provide support for embedding library media program standards in core instruction.

6. **Provide a statement of the mission and goals of this proposed renewal variance.**

Our goal is to continue to provide a learning environment which creates independent learners who are efficient consumers and producers of information. Our K-5 students will continue to have scheduled library time each week and our 6-12 students will have opportunities to visit the library through curriculum offerings and scheduling. Our library will continue to have flexible hours and our librarian will have a flexible schedule to meet the needs of our school district.

7. **List specific measurable objectives that demonstrate the proposed renewal variance will meet or exceed the results under the current standard(s).**

1. Continue to allow flexible scheduling to ensure that the library responds to information needs, fostering intellectual curiosity, and supporting learning. Measured by schedule and student contact time.
2. Continue to collaborate with teachers to gain understanding of content standards and will use Lexile levels, corresponding AR levels, and grade level content to enhance students reading and comprehension.
3. NWEA MAP reading data will be utilized to develop and purchase materials suitable for student body. These scores will also be utilized for long range planning to manage the human, 

**8. What data or evidence will be gathered to document progress toward meeting the measurable objectives of the renewal variance?**

Data will be gathered from NWEA MAP scores, Lexile scores, AR scores, and teacher Reading Mastery evaluation rubric scores. Classroom data will be examined in regard to student comprehension and learning in our Walk-To-Read program and student grade level placement according to success in that program.

**9. In what way does this variance meet the specific needs of the students in the school(s)?**

Our enrollment in the middle and high schools has fluctuated between 120-140 students. We currently employ a full-time librarian for our elementary (K-5), middle school (6-8), and high school (9-12). Thus, we are required to have services in that school with 0.1 FTE. We have found it impossible to find a certified employee willing to work 0.1 FTE.

**10. Describe how and why the proposed variance would be:**

**a. Workable**

We are a single campus with the elementary and middle school physically connected by buildings. The high school is within 10 yards of the middle school building. All students can easily access all areas of all three buildings. We currently operate as a K-12 Library setting and our students and staff are comfortable with this format. Schools and school districts face many financial burdens, to operate with one library and one full-time librarian is fiscally responsible to the taxpayers.

**b. Educationally sound.**

We have a certified librarian who serves our K-12 at this time. Literacy remains our top educational priority for this district. All students receive between 60-90 minutes per day of literacy instruction. Opportunities for students to access the library have been scheduled. Achievement data shows that current literacy goals are being met with the existing structure.

- c. Where applicable, aligned with program standards under ARM 10.55.1101 through 10.55.2101.

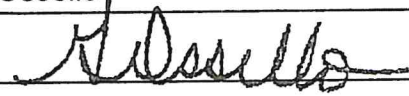
As mentioned above, our curriculum and program is aligned with 10.55.1801 - Library/Media

- d. Where applicable, aligned with content standards under ARM Chapters 53 and 54.

Our current library program does meet each benchmark for grades 4, 8, and 12. All students in grades K-5 have scheduled library time in which our librarian adheres to those benchmarks and standards. Our 6-8 grades have opportunities throughout the curriculums to meet these benchmarks and some are scheduled in the library for study sessions which allows the librarian to teach these skills. All K-12 students are versed on the inquiry process and how to retrieve information.

**Required school district signatures:**

Board Chair Name: Gina Ossello

Board Chair Signature:  Date: 2/22/2021

Superintendent Name: Hannah Nieskens

Superintendent Signature:  Date 2/22/2021


**Mail the signed form to:**

**Accreditation and Educator Preparation Division  
Office of Public Instruction  
PO Box 202501  
Helena, MT 59620-2501**

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**OPI USE ONLY**

Superintendent of Public Instruction:  Date 5/03/2021  
 Approve  Deny

Board of Public Education Chair  Date 5/14/21  
 Approve  Deny

## Regular Board Meeting of March 9, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Whitehall School District 4, 47 and 2 of Madison and Jefferson Counties was held on March 9, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Whitehall Middle School Library

### Board Members:

Gina Ossello  
Bobbie Wagner  
Scott Prevost  
Laura McDonald  
James Reiff  
Chad Hoover  
Billy Whitehurst (took seat after making public comment)

### Administrators:

Hannah Nieskens, Superintendent  
Patti Drake, District Clerk  
Melissa Robbins, 6-12 Principal  
Kurtis Koenig, K-5 Principal

Visitors: Rick Dubois, Liz Pullman, Allison Richardson, Billy Whitehurst

## AGENDA

### ITEM:

**Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Gina Ossello

**Flag Salute**

**Public Comment** Ms. Richardson thanked the administration for letting Missoula Children's Theatre come in to the building to hold a production. Billy Whitehurst addressed the board with his concerns about the math department in the high school. He believes the kids are struggling with the on-line classes. Ms. Robbins assured him they are working on the situation.

**Minutes** Scott Prevost made a joint motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of February 2, 2021 and the minutes of the Special Board Meeting of February 22, 2021. Laura McDonald seconded the motion. In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner, Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover  
Opposed: None  
Motion carried

**Correspondence** None

## REPORTS:

**Elementary Principal** (See attached) (Mr. Koenig also included the AD report)

**6-12 Principal** (See attached) (Ms. Robbins also included the AD report)

**Superintendent** (See attached)

## NEW BUSINESS

**Hire 6-12 Math Teacher** Ms. Nieskens recommend the board hire Lori Roys for the 6-12 Math position. She was a sub for us previously and is currently teaching in Harrison.



James Reiff made a joint motion to hire Lori Roys for the 6-12 Math position.

Billy Whitehurst seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner, Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None

Motion carried

**Hire High School Paraprofessional**

Ms. Nieskens recommended the board hire Chelsea Roman for the paraprofessional position that is open in the high school. Chelsea has students in our district and experience as a preschool teacher.

James Reiff made a high school motion to hire Chelsea Roman for the paraprofessional position.

Chad Hoover seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner, Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None

Motion carried

**Hire High School Spring Coaches**

Ms. Nieskens recommend the board hire Hunter Johnson for the Assistant High School Track position and Kevin Ebert for the Assistant High School Golf position. Hunter has previous experience as an assistant track coach and Kevin is an accomplished amateur golfer.

Scott Prevost made a high school motion to hire Hunter Johnson as the Assistant High School Track Coach and Kevin Ebert as the Assistant High School Golf Coach.

James Reiff seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner, Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None

Motion carried

**Approve Substitute Staff**

Ms. Nieskens asked the board to approve Alice Bowman and RaShell Maershbecker as substitutes.

James Reiff made a joint motion to hire Alice Bowman and RaShell Maershbecker as substitutes.

Bobbi Wagner seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner, Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None

Motion carried

**Approve Variance to Standards  
Application for Library FTE**

Ms. Nieskens informed the board that the variance we filed 2 years ago will expire at the end of this school year. The reason for filing this variance is due to the amount of K-12 students we have, we are required to employ a 1.1 librarian and it impossible to employ 0.1 of a librarian. If the reapplication for the variance is approved, it will extend the variance for 3 years.

Scott Prevost made a joint motion to approve the filing of the Variance of Standards Application for Library FTE.

James Reiff seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover  
Opposed: None  
Motion carried

**Approve Classified Job  
Descriptions**

Ms. Nieskens explained the steps that were taken to update the job descriptions for the classified. Each job description was updated with information from MTSBA to fit our district. The job descriptions were then given to the most senior person for their input. After they were edited, the job descriptions were reviewed by the board committee, Scott Prevost and Laura McDonald. Ms. Nieskens is asking the board to approve the job descriptions for the following: Clerk/Business Manager, Assistant Clerk, Food Service Supervisor/Head Cook, Assistant Cook, Kitchen Helper, Maintenance Supervisor, Custodian, Summer Groundskeeper, School Nurse, School Secretary, Paraprofessional, Technology Coordinator.

James Reiff made a joint motion to approve the classified job descriptions as submitted.

Billy Whitehurst seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None

Motion carried

**Approve 6-12 Handbook**

Ms. Robbins went through the changes for the 2021-2022 6-12 handbook that she would like the board to approve. The following changes were made: Attendance verbiage needs to be added to include policy 1906; Credit Recovery remove language that limits online recovery options; Digital Academy we cannot restrict the amount of online courses towards our diplomas, so that verbiage should come out also add that Acellus will be an option for on-line classes; Graduation requirements 2 Lab Science versus 2 Science.

James Reiff made a joint motion to approve the 2021-2022 6-12 handbook with changes as submitted.

Bobbi Wagner seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None

Motion carried

**Approve 2021-2022 Calendar**

Ms. Nieskens provided the board with the 2021-2022 school calendar. The staff was provided with different options for the 2021-2022 school year and this is the calendar that was chosen. The teachers will start on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and the students will start on August 25<sup>th</sup>. The Christmas break is 2 full weeks and the spring break will be 1 full week. Ms. Nieskens recommended the board approve this calendar.

James Reiff made a joint motion to approve the 2021-2022 calendar as submitted.

Bobbi Wagner seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None  
Motion carried

**Elementary (PK-5) Principal  
Evaluation/Recommend for  
Rehire**

Ms. Nieskens recommended the board rehire Mr. Koenig as the Elementary (PK-5) Principal. She informed the board that he is doing a great job, this is his 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The Pre-K program was added this year, he helped win the \$1.5 million literacy grant and took on the position of Co-Athletic Director. He navigated through all of additions to his duties during the COVID pandemic successfully.

Scott Prevost made an elementary motion to rehire Kurtis Koenig as the Elementary (PK-5) Principal.

James Reiff seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner, Laura McDonald

Opposed: None  
Motion carried

**6-12 Principal Evaluation/Recommend  
for Rehire**

Ms. Nieskens recommended the board rehire Ms. Robbins as the 6-12 Principal. She informed the board that she also is doing a great job, this is her 2<sup>nd</sup> year. She helped win the \$1.5 million literacy grant, implemented the Acellus online program, transitioned the 6-12 to a block schedule and took on the Co-Athletic Director position. She also navigated through all of these changes during the COVID pandemic successfully.

Billy Whitehurst made a joint motion to rehire Melissa Robbins as the 6-12 Principal.

James Reiff seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner, Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None  
Motion carried

**Discuss and Decide Operation of  
Cardwell Bus Route for Whitehall  
High School District**

Ms. Nieskens informed the board that it has been brought to her attention by Sarah Eyer, County Superintendent of Schools, that Cardwell has been illegally claiming reimbursement from the state and county for Whitehall students riding Cardwell buses in Whitehall territory. There are 3 options of how this issue can be resolved: Option 1: Cardwell continues to bus our students at no cost and we give them permission to enter our district, they cannot claim state or county reimbursement for the route mileage; Option 2: We run our own route for our High School District and ask for reimbursement from the state and county. Harlow's has been contacted and they believe an additional route is possible, the estimated cost for the route is between \$49,000 and \$50,000. The length of the route is 51 miles; Option 3: We contract with Cardwell to bus our students. We claim the state and county reimbursement and pass it on to Cardwell.

Discussion: After much discussion it was decided that the cleanest option would be option 2.

**Approve Advertisement of  
Resolution of Intent to Impose  
an Increase in Levies**

James Reiff made a high school motion to adopt Option 2.  
Scott Prevost seconded the motion.  
In favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover  
Opposed: None  
Motion carried

Ms. Nieskens informed the board that we have to notice the taxpayers by March 31<sup>st</sup> every year that we may choose to permissively levy additional money for Transportation Fund, Bus Depreciation Fund, Tuition Fund, Adult Ed Fund and Building Reserve Fund. Ms. Nieskens estimated that we will have to increase funds for the High School Transportation Fund and the High School Tuition Fund.

James Reiff made a joint motion to advertise the resolution of intent to impose an increase in levies as submitted.  
Billy Whitehurst seconded the motion.  
In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover  
Opposed: None  
Motion carried

**Approve Early Enrollment  
For Kindergarten Readiness  
Program**

Ms. Nieskens asked the board to approve the enrollment of J.A., O.R. and A.F. into the Kindergarten Readiness Program.

James Reiff made an elementary motion to approve the enrollment of J.A, O.R. and A.F into the Kindergarten Readiness Program.  
Bobbi Wagner seconded the motion.  
In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald  
Opposed: None  
Motion carried

**Claims and Accounts**

The claims approval list for the Elementary and High School Districts were presented to the board.

Scott Prevost made an elementary motion to approve payment of the elementary claims for March as submitted.  
James Reiff seconded the motion.  
In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald  
Opposed: None  
Motion carried

Scott Prevost made a high school motion to approve payment of the high school claims for March as submitted.  
James Reiff seconded the motion.  
In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover  
Opposed: None  
Motion carried

**ADJOURNMENT:**

James Reiff made a joint motion to adjourn the meeting.

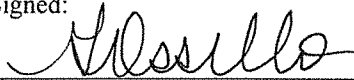
Bobbi Wagner seconded the motion.

In Favor: Gina Ossello, James Reiff, Scott Prevost, Bobbi Wagner,  
Laura McDonald, Billy Whitehurst, Chad Hoover

Opposed: None

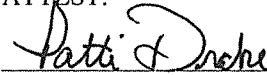
Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Signed:



Chairman

ATTEST:



Clerk