



DRAFT

OPI Bill Draft – 2025 Legislature

Provide for a new class of licensure for paraprofessionals to improve special education services for special education students in Montana. Licensure of paraprofessionals will create pathways for paraprofessionals to advance in the field of special education through professional development, improve recruitment, and increase retention of qualified educators serving Montana's students with disabilities.

Draft amendment language could be as follows:

20-4-106. Classifications of teacher and specialist certificates.

(1) The superintendent of public instruction shall issue teacher certificates and the board of public education shall adopt teacher certification policies on the basis of the following classifications of teacher certificates:

- (a) The class 1 professional certificate may be issued to an otherwise qualified applicant who has completed a teacher education program that includes a bachelor's degree and a minimum of 1 year of study beyond the degree in a unit of the Montana university system or an equivalent institution. The professional certificate may be endorsed for elementary instruction, for secondary instruction, or both, and for specified subject fields on the basis of the applicant's academic and professional training and according to the board of public education policy for teacher certification endorsement.
- (b) The class 2 standard certificate may be issued to an otherwise qualified applicant who has completed a 4-year teacher education program and who has been awarded a bachelor's degree by a unit of the Montana university system or an equivalent institution. The standard certificate may be endorsed for elementary instruction, for secondary instruction, or both, and for specified subject fields on the basis of the applicant's academic and professional training and according to the board of public education policy for teacher certification endorsement.
- (c) The class 3 administrative and supervisory certificate may be issued to an otherwise qualified applicant who is eligible for a teacher or specialist certificate in the school or schools in which the applicant would be an administrator or would supervise. The applicant must also possess the training and experience required by the policies of the board of public education for an endorsement as superintendent, principal, or supervisor. An applicant for a class 3 administrative and supervisory certificate who is currently licensed in another state at a comparable level of licensure essentially equivalent to the class 3 administrative and supervisory certificate is eligible for licensure with verification of successful administrative experience as provided by the policies of the board of public education.

(d) (i) The class 4 vocational, recreational, or adult education certificate may be issued to an otherwise qualified applicant who has the qualifications of training and experience required by the United States office of education or the qualifications required by the special needs of the several vocational, recreational, or adult education fields and who can qualify under the policy of the board of public education for the issuance of this classification of teacher certification.

(ii) (A) A class 4C license must be issued to individuals who hold at least a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma and have completed a minimum of 10,000 hours of documented, relevant work experience, which may include apprenticeship training, documenting the knowledge and skills required in the specific trade in which they are to teach. Acceptable documentation of relevant work experience is determined by the superintendent of public instruction consistent with rules of the board of public education.

(B) Trades in which a class 4C licensed individual can teach include agriculture business, marketing, and communications, agriculture mechanics, auto body, automotive technology, aviation, building maintenance, building trades, computer information systems, culinary arts, diesel mechanics, drafting, electronics, engineering, graphic arts, health occupations education, heavy equipment operator, horticulture, industrial mechanics, livestock production, machining, metals, plant and soil sciences, ROTC, small engines, power equipment technology, traffic education, theatre arts, videography, welding, and any other trade approved by the superintendent of public instruction.

(e) The class 5 provisional certificate may be issued to an otherwise qualified applicant who can provide satisfactory evidence of the intent to qualify in the future for a class 1 or a class 2 certificate and who has completed a 4-year college program or its equivalent and holds a bachelor's degree from a unit of the Montana university system or its equivalent. The provisional certificate may be endorsed for elementary instruction, for secondary instruction, or both, and for special subject fields on the basis of the applicant's academic and professional training and according to the board of public education policy for teacher or specialist certification endorsement.

(2) The superintendent of public instruction shall issue specialist certificates, and the board of public education shall adopt specialist certification policies. The specialist certificate may be issued to an otherwise qualified applicant who has the training, experience, and license required under the standards of the board of public education for the certification of a profession other than the teaching profession.

(3) The superintendent of public instruction shall issue paraprofessional certificates, and the board of public education shall adopt paraprofessional certification policies. The paraprofessional certificate may be issued to an otherwise qualified applicant who has the training, experience, and license required under the standards of the board of public education for the certification of a profession other than the teacher profession.

(34) For purposes of evaluating the qualifications of applicants for either teacher or specialist certificates, a year means the instructional period consisting of three quarters or two semesters or other terms that are recognized as an academic year by any unit of the Montana university system or equivalent institution.