

VARIANCES TO STANDARDS APPLICATION

Initial Application (two years)

Purpose: [ARM 10.55.604\(1\)](#) "A local board of trustees may apply to the Board of Public Education through the Superintendent of Public Instruction to implement variance to an assurance standard or a section of assurance standards, excluding standards stating statutory criteria, standards pertaining to educator licensure or endorsement, and content standards as defined by the Board of Public Education and provided in guidance from the Superintendent of Public Instruction."

DUE DATE

First semester implementation; second Monday in October

COUNTY: *Big Horn*

DISTRICT: *Hardin High School*

LIST EACH SCHOOL THAT IS REQUESTING THE VARIANCE:

Big Horn Academy

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.

ARM 10.55.709 (Library Media Services, K–12)

The school library shall be housed in a central location, and each school shall have a licensed and endorsed library media specialist at the following ratio:

- (a) 0.5 FTE for schools with 126–250 students;
- (b) 1 FTE for schools with 251–500 students;
- (c) 1.5 FTE for schools with 501–1,000 students;
- (d) 2 FTE for schools with 1,001–1,500 students;
- (e) 2.5 FTE for schools with 1,501–2,000 students;
- (f) 3 FTE for schools with 2,001 or more students.

Schools with fewer than 126 students shall employ or contract with a licensed and endorsed school library media specialist.

Big Horn Academy consists of a High School with 80 students enrolled.

2. Describe the variance requested.

Big Horn Academy, with an enrollment of 80 students, is located in close proximity to the Hardin High School campus, where a full-time licensed Library Media Specialist is employed. Big Horn Academy respectfully requests a variance to allow the services of this existing specialist to fulfill the library media requirements for our students.

3. Describe how and why the proposed variance would be:

a. Workable.

The proposed variance would be workable because Big Horn Academy is located near the Hardin High School campus, which already employs a full-time licensed Library Media Specialist. The Hardin High School library is open throughout the school day, ensuring consistent access to services. Big Horn Academy students would be able to utilize the library and the expertise of the media specialist during their scheduled credit recovery period for one hour each day. This arrangement provides equitable access to resources without the need for additional staffing, while fostering collaboration between campuses. It is both efficient and sustainable, ensuring that students at Big Horn Academy receive the same quality of library media services as their peers at Hardin High School.

b. Educationally sound.

The proposed variance would be educationally sound because it ensures Big Horn Academy students have daily access to a highly qualified Library Media Specialist with extensive classroom experience. The Hardin High School Library Media Specialist not only holds the proper licensure but also brings many years of teaching expertise, which enhances their ability to support students in research, literacy, and critical thinking. This background allows the specialist to provide instructional guidance that goes beyond managing resources, ensuring students develop essential academic and technology skills. With the library open all day and structured access during Big Horn Academy's credit recovery period, students benefit from consistent, expert support. This arrangement promotes equity, leverages the district's professional talent, and sustains high-quality library media services without requiring additional staffing.

c. Designed to meet or exceed results under established standards.

Hardin High School employs a full-time licensed and endorsed Library Media Specialist who also has many years of classroom teaching experience.

This ensures students at Big Horn Academy are supported by a professional who meets and exceeds the state's credentialing expectations.

-Equitable Access to Services

The Hardin High School library is open all day, providing consistent and reliable access to media services.

Big Horn Academy students will have daily access for one hour during their credit recovery period, guaranteeing dedicated time for support.

-Instructional Support Beyond Resources

The media specialist's teaching background enhances their ability to provide direct instruction in research skills, media literacy, technology integration, and critical thinking skills specifically envisioned in the accreditation standards.

-Meeting or -Exceeding Intent of Standards

The rule requires access to a licensed media specialist; this variance ensures access to a full-time specialist rather than the part-time allocation normally required for a school of 80 students.

As a result, Big Horn Academy students receive equal or greater support than they would under the minimum standards

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

-Instructional Quality

The Hardin High School Library Media Specialist brings extensive classroom experience, ensuring that instruction in research, literacy, and technology skills meets or exceeds the expectations outlined in ARM 10.55.1101–10.55.2101 for high school programs.

-Student Access and Equity

ARM 10.55.1101 emphasizes providing equitable access to resources and support. Big Horn Academy students will have daily access to the library during their credit recovery period, ensuring parity with other students in the district.

-Resource Availability and Integration

ARM 10.55.1101–2101 calls for the integration of instructional resources to support student learning outcomes. By utilizing the fully resourced Hardin High School library, students gain access to up-to-date materials, digital resources, and instructional support, exceeding what a small campus library could provide.

-Outcome-Based Results

The variance supports standards requiring that programs demonstrate student learning and achievement through structured access and expert guidance. Students' engagement with a licensed, experienced media specialist promotes research proficiency and technology competency, supporting the goals of ARM 10.55.1101-2101.

4. Attach Board of Trustee meeting minutes that show the Board of Trustees adopted the application for a variance at an official, properly noticed meeting that provides evidence that local school community stakeholders were involved in the consideration and development of the proposed variance to an assurance standard or a section of assurance standards.
(Stakeholder groups include trustees, administrators, teachers, classified school staff, families, community members, and students as applicable.)

Required school district signatures:

Board Chair Name: Jodeen Marston
Board Chair Signature: Jodeen Marston Date: 9-15-25
Superintendent Name: Tobin Novak
Superintendent Signature: TN Date 9/15/25

Email the signed form to:

OPIAccred@mt.gov

Chair Torske. Mrs. Killsback reviewed Electronic Claims dated 8/28/25 in the amount of \$1,017,458.16 and recommended approval.

3. Personnel: New Hires; Substitutes; Reassignments; Retirements; Terminations; Etc.

~Resignations Accepted by Superintendent Upon Receipt

Classified

- Billy Eastman, Custodian – District-Wide

~Hires & Reassignments

Classified

- Acorn Holds The Enemy, Paraprofessional – Hardin Primary School
- Daniel Brien, Jr., Custodian – Hardin Intermediate School
- Ramil Mula, Custodian – Hardin High School
- Harold Crooked Arm, Delivery Driver/Maintenance Technician – District Maintenance (*applied, interviewed and hired for this position - previously custodian at HMS*)
- Cesar Vedoy Nuno, Roving Custodian – District-Wide

Substitutes

Genevieve Bull Chief	Tatah Plain Feather
Mitch Evans	Angelina Stops at Pretty Places
David Knows His Gun	Cameron Tobacco
Marina Macias	

Activities

~Hardin High School

- Assistant Boys Basketball Coach – Jared Samuelson; and Jae Hugs
- Assistant Girls Basketball Coach – Jonah Red Cherries
- Assistant Swim Coach – Larry Erickson
- Assistant Boys Wrestling Coach – Mario Pallone; and Rob Koyama
- Assistant Girls Wrestling Coach – Kristan Dillon

~Hardin Middle School

- Volleyball Coach – Andrea Murdock

Contingent Offers – Waiting on Results of the Criminal Background Report

- Thomas Ten Bear, Custodian – Hardin Middle School

4. Non-Resident Students Recommended for Approval

Four (4) non-resident HS students and One (1) non-resident ELEM student are recommended for approval. One (1) non-resident HS student is recommended for denial.

Mr. Schubert made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kepp, to approve Consent Agenda Items 1-4. Chairman Marston asked if there was any discussion and there was none. She asked those voting in favor to raise their hand. Motion carried.

B. Bid Opening – Thomas Bus

Superintendent Novasio reported that no bids were received for the bus. He asked the Board if they were okay with him trying to sell the bus on other sites for \$120K and all approved.

C. Review Trustee Zone Map Revisions – Call for Public Hearing

Superintendent Novasio presented the updated Trustee Zone Map, prepared by John Eisen, K-12 Consultants. He stated there are no Big Horn County employees who have Geographic Information System (GIS) experience which is why K-12 Consultants was hired to complete this time-sensitive project.

A review of the zones showed a majority Native American population in 4 of 5 zones. Superintendent Novasio stated the next step is for the Board to schedule a public meeting and he reviewed the law for the process. Discussion followed.

Superintendent Novasio stated the Board needs to move forward with this process in order to have all steps completed to put into place for 2026 elections. Mr. Matovich made a motion to approve the proposed Trustee Zone Map; Vice Chair Torske amended the motion, adding the need to hold a public hearing prior to the next meeting. Chairman Marston asked if there was any further discussion and there was none. She asked those voting in favor to raise their hand, and then she asked those opposed to raise their hand. The votes were as follows:

Aye: Vice Chair Thor Torske; Mr. Kepp; Mr. Matovich; Mr. Schubert; Ms. Takes Enemy; and Chairman Marston. Nay: Mrs. Killsback

Motion carried.

D. Approve Variances to Standards Application – Big Horn Academy (BHA) – Library

The Variances to Standards for Library, BHA, was reviewed and discussed. Mr. Sidwell stated no future applications have to be submitted for as long as BHA is in existence.

Mr. Schuber made a motion, seconded by Vice Chair Torske, to approve the Library Variances to Standards Application for BHA. Chairman Marston asked if there was any discussion and there was none. She asked those voting in favor to raise their hand. Motion carried.

E. Approve Job Description – Activities Custodian

The Position Description for Activities Custodian was presented and reviewed. Discussion followed and Superintendent Novasio recommended approval.

Vice Chair Torske made a motion, seconded by Ms. Takes Enemy, to approve the job description for an activities custodian. Chairman Marston asked if there was any discussion and Christy Morse stated there are five (5) custodians already at the High School, more than in the past, and she said current staff should be able to complete the duties without having to hire another custodian. Vice Chair Torske stated he understands her concerns and discussion followed. Chairman Marston asked those voting in favor to raise their hand, and then she asked those opposed to raise their hand. The votes were as follows:

Aye: Vice Chair Thor Torske; Mrs. Killsback; Mr. Matovich; Mr. Schubert; Ms. Takes Enemy; and Chairman Marston. Nay: Mr. Kepp

Motion carried.

F. Policy Updates: Revisions: 2150, 2450, 3141, and 5122; New Policy: 5123 (One Reading)

The following policies were reviewed: 2150 - Suicide Awareness and Prevention; 2450 - Indian Education for All; 3141 - Nonresident Student Enrollment; 5122 - Fingerprints and Criminal Background Investigation; and new policy 5123 - Employer Verification of Employee.

Superintendent Novasio stated all policies can be approved and adopted on the first reading and he recommended the Board adopt the updates and new policy.

Mr. Schubert made a motion, seconded by Vice Chair Torske, to approve the updates and new policy as presented. Chairman Marston asked if there was any discussion and there was none. She asked those voting in favor to raise their hand. Motion carried.

G. Set Dates for October and December Board Meetings

Superintendent Novasio reported the December 9 meeting date conflicts with the NIISA Conference. He also stated the October 14 meeting needs to be rescheduled as he will be out of the office October 8-16. Discussion followed and Superintendent Novasio recommended rescheduling October 14 to October 7, 2025, and holding a special meeting for the public hearing prior to the regular meeting. The Board agreed to changing the date of the regular meeting from December 9 to Thursday, December 11.

H. Request County Superintendent to Fill Open Trustee Seat

Superintendent Novasio presented a letter addressed to John Small, County Superintendent of Schools, with a request for appointment to fill the vacated trustee position from the Spring Creek/Decker area for the High School. This vacancy was listed for the May school election and there were no candidates. Since there has not been any interest from any person who resides in this area within the 60-day period, this becomes the responsibility of the County Superintendent to appoint a trustee to this position according to MCA 20-3-309(1).

Ms. Takes Enemy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Matovich, to approve the letter to the County Superintendent of Schools as presented. Chairman Marston asked if there was any discussion and there was none. She asked those voting in favor to raise their hand. Motion carried.

4. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

There were no requests for public comment.

5. Upcoming Meetings

The next regular meeting is scheduled on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, beginning at 6:30 p.m. with a Public Hearing on the updated Trustee Zones scheduled the same evening, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

6. Adjourn

Chairman Marston adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Jodeen K. Marston, Board Chair

ATTEST:

Kym Kern, District Clerk



Hardin School Districts 17H & 1
401 Park Road
Hardin, MT 59034-2409
Phone: 406-665-9300
Fax: 406-665-9338

SCHOOL BOARD AGENDA

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH, 2025

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTER - 636 WEST 5TH STREET

REGULAR SESSION 5:30 P.M.

In accordance with Montana law, citizens have the right to comment on an item that is specifically listed on the agenda. Citizens will be permitted to do so when the item comes up for discussion and action. The board chair will indicate when the public has the opportunity to comment prior to board action on a particular agenda item. The Board Chair has the authority to manage all public comment periods and will do so in accordance with state law and district policy. Individuals who wish to be placed on the Board agenda MUST notify the Superintendent, IN WRITING, at least ten (10) days before the Board meeting (Board Policy # 1420). The written request MUST include the reason for the appearance. If the reason for the appearance is a COMPLAINT against any District employee, the individual filing the complaint must demonstrate the Uniform Complaint Procedure has been followed.

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance - Welcome

- A. Public Comment
- B. Correspondence

2. District Reports

- A. [High School Report](#) - Mrs. Albert
- B. [Superintendent's Report](#)

3. Items for Action

- A. Consent Agenda
 1. Approve Minutes: Regular Meeting August 12th, Special Meeting August 22nd
 2. Claims: Electronic Claims, Student Activity Accounts - Trustee Killsback
 3. Personnel: New Hires; Substitutes; Reassignments; Terminations; Etc.
 4. Approve/Deny Non-Resident Students
- B. Bid Opening - Thomas Bus
- C. Review Trustee Zone Map Revisions - Call for Public Hearing
- D. Approve Variance to Standards Application - Big Horn Academy - Library
- E. Approve Job Descriptions - Activities Custodian
- F. Policy Updates: Revisions: 2150, 2450, 3141, 5122, New Policy: 5123 (One Reading)
- G. Set Date for October and December Board Meetings
- H. Request County Superintendent to Fill Open Trustee Seat

4. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

The public comment portion of the agenda is not the time designated to hear items that are specifically listed/identified on the agenda. For those individuals who desire to address the Board during the public comment portion of the meeting, if you haven't already done so, please sign your name to the sheet and indicate the general topic on which you will be commenting. The Board Chairperson will call individuals to speak in the order listed on the sheet provided. Please state your name prior to beginning your comment. There will be an opportunity for citizens who have not signed in to comment at the conclusion of the comment period. The Board would like to remind everyone in attendance to avoid violations of individual rights of privacy when providing comment. The Board is not authorized to hear comments on contested cases or other adjudicative proceedings. By law, the District cannot take any action on any matter discussed during the public comment portion of the meeting as those matters are not specifically noticed on the agenda. The Board may take a matter raised during the public comment period under consideration for inclusion on a future agenda. Board meetings are held in public, but are NOT PUBLIC MEETINGS. To avoid violations of an individual's rights and/or privacy, NO COMMUNITY MEMBER will be allowed to make any comments about any STUDENT, STAFF MEMBER, OR member of the general public. Comment will be limited to three minutes per person, per meeting.

5. Upcoming Meetings - Regular Meeting October 7th (Recommended), Public Hearing TBD

6. Adjourn

NEXT REGULAR MEETING IS TBD



Hardin School Districts 17H & 1
401 Park Road
Hardin, MT 59034-2409
Phone: 406-665-9300
Fax: 406-665-9338

Superintendent's Recommendations:

A. Consent Agenda

1. [**Approve Minutes**](#): Regular Meeting August 12th, Special Meeting August 22nd
2. [**Claims**](#): Electronic Claims, Student Activity Accounts - Trustee Killsback
3. [**Personnel**](#): New Hires; Substitutes; Reassignments; Terminations; Etc.
4. [**Approve/Deny Non-Resident Students**](#)

All items can be approved with one motion and vote. Any trustee can pull an item from the consent agenda at any meeting if they want to discuss that item further. I recommend the board approve the consent agenda items.

B. Bid Opening - Thomas Bus

The board will review any bids received in accordance with the [resolution to sell out 2020 Thomas bus](#).

C. Review Trustee Zone Map Revisions - Call for Public Hearing

In an effort to bring our trustee zones into balance, I contracted the services of a [school facilities planner with GIS experience](#) to adjust the [current zones](#) so that they will be balanced using the latest census data. I recommend the board consider the [presented updated map](#). I believe that we need to follow the same process in updating zones as has to be done under Montana law to create single-member trustee zones, [MCA 20-3-337](#). If the board accepts these maps as a proposed plan, then the next step would be to publish the proposed plan in the local newspaper and notice of a public hearing in order to take public comment. In accordance with the Windy Boy case from 1986 which led to the original creation of single-trustee zones, we have included the census numbers for both Native American and White residents to make sure the new zones reflect the overall demographics of the county and do not discriminate against a racial minority as defined in [Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965](#). [Physical description of proposed zones](#).

D. Approve Variance to Standards Application - Big Horn Academy - Library

We need Board approval before we can submit a [Variance to the Standards Application](#) to the Office of Public Education. This is to allow the Big Horn Academy students to use the Hardin High School Library rather than having a stand-alone Library at the school.

E. Approve Job Descriptions - Activities Custodian

I recommend the Board approve a job description for [Activities Custodian](#) position(s).

F. Policy Updates: Revisions: 2150, 2450, 3141, 5122, New Policy: 5123 (One Reading)

I recommend the Board update the following Policies: [2150 Suicide Awareness and Prevention](#), [2450 Indian Education for All](#), [3141 Nonresident Student Enrollment](#) and [5122 Fingerprints and Criminal Background Investigations](#). These four updates are revisions and only require one reading. Additionally, I recommend you approve the first and only reading of Policy [5123 Employer Verification of Employee](#). Since this new policy is required by law, it only requires one reading ([Policy 1310](#)).



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G. Set Date for October and December Board Meetings

I have a conflict on October 14th and ask that we move the October Board Meeting up a week to the 7th. The December 9th date conflicts with the [National Indian Impacted Schools Conference](#). We have several possible dates including Thursday the 11th or Tuesday the 16th.

H. Request County Superintendent to Fill Open Trustee Seat

I am recommending the trustees approve sending a [letter to the County Superintendent](#) asking that he fill the open high school only (Decker area) trustee position in accordance with [MCA 20-3-309](#).