



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: Flathead

DISTRICT: Helena Flats School District

LIST EACH SCHOOL THAT IS REQUESTING THE VARIANCE:

Helena Flats School

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.**

Helena Flats School District is requesting a variance to ARM 10.55.709 - Library Media Services Section 1(b).



2. Describe the variance requested.

Helena Flats School District is requesting a variance to ARM 10.55.709- Library Media Services Section 1(b). This standard requires schools to have a "licensed and endorsed library media specialist at the following ratio: ... (b) 1.0 FTE for schools with 251-500 students."

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

a. Workable.

The proposed variance to ARM 10.55.709 is workable for a number of reasons:

At the time of this application, the student enrollment for Helena Flats Elementary (PK-6) is at 256 students. Due to the close proximity to the lower ratio of " (a) 0.5 FTE for schools with 126-250 students;" as outlined in ARM 10.55.709, Helena Flats requests a variance to ARM 10.55.709 - Section 1 (b) and be allowed to adhere to Section 1 (a). The minimal overage of 6 enrolled students does not create a situation that is difficult for current library media staff to handle as we are within the parameters outlined in ARM 10.55.712 Class Size - Elementary.

Additionally, our entire school district is located in a single building. This ensures that ALL Helena Flats students can benefit from the academic and instructional resources available. Further, given the historically transitory nature of some of our student population, there is a very real possibility that students will leave the district, thereby reducing our enrollment under the 251-500 student ratio.

By maintaining a continuity of resources and aligning with curriculum standards, the proposed variance will meet established requirements under Chapter 55 without interruption while providing support for all Helena Flats Students.



b. **Educationally sound.**

The proposed variance is educationally sound because it continues to ensure equitable access to the essential resources and supports for all students based on acceptable parameters outlined in ARM 10.55.712 Elementary Class Size, to which we adhere to and are in compliance with. All student benefit from the same organizational structure and resources. This includes, access to all library materials and supports, as well as technology that includes but not limited to Chromebooks, printers, internet access, Smartboard, green screens, audio and video equipment. By continuing to provide access to these resources, the proposed variance continues to promote academic success and student inquiry.

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

The proposed variance does not impact the overall student access or "teacher-time" due to adherence to established class sizes as outlined in ARM 10.55.712. Students access our library services and supports as individual classrooms. The minimal 6 student enrollment overage is mitigated through this approach thereby adhering to established standards in practice and continuing to foster a well-supported learning environment that encourages academic success for all students.



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

N/A

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: Kevin Fritz
Board Chair Signature:  Date: 9/16/25

Superintendent Name: Andy S. Maher
Superintendent Signature:  Date 9/16/25

Email the signed form to:

OPIAccred@mt.gov

**Helena Flats SD #15
1000 Helena Flats Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
September 16th, 2025
6:30 PM**

Pledge Allegiance to the Flag and Call to Order

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Minutes
3. Financial Reports
4. Out of District Attendance Agreements

Action Items

1. Approval of Basketball Coaching Contracts
2. Second Reading-Policies: **3655 Student Safety & 8560: Display of Flags and Banners on District**
3. Policy Revisions: **1009FE Recruitment and Retention, 2150 Suicide Awareness, 2335 Human Sexuality Instruction and Identity Instruction, 2450 Indian Education for All, 3416 Administering Medicines to Students, 3650 Montana Pupil Online Personal Information Protection, 5255 Disciplinary Action**
4. Approval of Application for Variance to Standard
5. Approval of deviation from adopted calendar

Information Item

1. First Reading- New Policies:5123 Employer Verification of Employee & 5252 Notice of Nonrenewal of Nontenured Teacher for Financial Reasons
2. Action Plan for Goals (Administrative & Board)
3. Constitution/Citizenship Day (9/17/25) and Freedom Week (last week of September)
4. Committee Meeting dates/times established

Public Comment

Reports

PTO
Teacher
Principal
Superintendent

Adjourn

Helena Flats School District R

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1420F

Notice Regarding Public Comment

Montana law requires school districts and other public agencies to include on the agenda for public meetings an item allowing public comment on any *public matter not otherwise specifically listed on the agenda* that is within the jurisdiction of the agency. As has also been the practice of the District, and in accordance with Montana law, if any member desires to speak to an item that is *specifically listed/identified on the agenda*, you will be allowed to do so when the item comes up for discussion and action. 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, the Board Chairperson will call individuals to speak. The Board would like to remind everyone in attendance that to avoid violations of individual rights of privacy, a member of the public wishing to address the Board during this time will not be allowed to make comments about any student, staff member, or member of the general public during his/her designated time to speak. In addition, the Board will not hear comments on contested cases or other adjudicative proceedings.

Depending on the number of persons who wish to address the Board, the Board Chairperson may place reasonable time limits on comments, in order to maintain and ensure effective and efficient operations of the Board.

By law, the District cannot take any action on any matter discussed during the “public comment” portion of the meeting, until such time as the matter is specifically noticed on the agenda, and the public has been allowed the opportunity to comment.

Helena Flats School Board Meeting Minutes

Date: September 16th, 2025

Time: 6:30 PM

Location: 1000 Helena Flats Road, Kalispell, MT 59901

At 6:30 pm, Board Chair Kevin Fritz called the meeting to order with the pledge.

Attendees

Board Members	Staff	Others in Attendance
Kevin Fritz (Board Chair)	Tonnie Decker, District Clerk	Kelly Leaser
Jaclynne Magers	Andrew Mahera, Superintendent	Ashley Cheesman
Chris Parson	Dr. Mike Barton, Principal	Elizabeth Baker
Dillon Wilkinson		Whitney Cook
Keith Nelson		

Consent Agenda

Approval of Agenda

Minutes

Financial Reports

Out of District Attendance Agreements

Mr. Parson moved to approve the consent agenda. It was seconded. The Board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

Action Items

- Approval of Basketball Coaching Contracts
 - o Nathan Magers and Cody Holmquist

Mr. Nelson moved to approve the coaching contracts as presented. The motion was seconded. It opened for discussion.

After the discussion, the Board voted in favor. Mrs. Magers abstained from voting. The motion carried.

- New Policy Second Reading
 - o Policy 3655: Student Safety
 - o Policy 8560: Display of Flags and Banners on District Property

Mr. Wilkinson moved to approve the final reading of policies 3655, Student Safety, and 8560, Display of Flags and Banners of District Property. It was seconded. It opened for discussion. After the discussion, the board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

- Policy Revisions
 - o 1009FE Recruitment and Retention - Flexible Instructor Licensing - allows for a retired teacher to be hired as a substitute and not required to wait 150 days
 - o 2150 Suicide Awareness - Teacher training and professional development requirement - we've already implemented this
 - o 2335 Human Sexuality Instruction and Identity Instruction - Now requires parents to OPT IN if offering Sexual Identity as part of Human Sexuality Instruction.
 - We have contracted with the Flathead Valley Dept of Health for Human Sexuality Instruction and will need to inform them of the requirement
 - Do we include it in our curriculum or move to leave it out?
 - o 2450 Indian Education for All - wording change
 - o 3416 Administering Medicines to Students - now includes the option for districts to purchase Albuterol for student use - not something we're currently doing nor looking at
 - o 3650 Montana Pupil Online Personal Information Protection - clarifies the definition'
 - o 5255 Disciplinary Action - Staff cannot be disciplined for misgendering or misusing pronouns

Mr. Wilkinson moved to approve the recommended revisions to policies 1009FE Recruitment and Retention. It was seconded and opened for discussion. After the discussion, the Board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

Mr. Parson moved to accept the revision to 2150 Suicide Awareness. The motion was seconded and opened for discussion. After the discussion, the Board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

Mr. Nelson moved to table policy 2335 Human Sexuality Instruction and Identity Instruction. It was seconded. The board voted all in favor to table. The motion to table was carried.

Mr. Wilkinson moved to accept 2450 Indian Education for All revisions. It was seconded and opened for discussion. After the discussion, the Board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

Mr. Nelson moved to accept the revisions 3416 Administering Medicines to Students. It was seconded and opened for discussion. There was a discussion on providing prescription drugs to students. After the discussion, the Board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

Mr. Wilkinson moved to accept the revisions as presented, 3650 Montana Pupil Online Personal Information Protection. It was seconded and opened for discussion. After the discussion, the Board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

Mr. Parson moved to accept the revisions as presented for policy 5255 Disciplinary Action. It was seconded and opened for discussion. After the discussion, the board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

- Approval of Application for Variance to Standard

- o Requesting board approval to submit an application to allow a variance to the standard for ARM 10.55.709 Library Media Services
 - We are 6 enrollees over the established student ratio in K6
 - Standards require us to have a 1.0 FTE librarian (we currently have 0.5 FTE)
 - **Requesting variance to the standard to NOT be required to hire an additional 0.5 FTE**

Mr. Nelson moved to approve the Application for Variance to Standard for ARM 10.55.709 Library Media Services. It was seconded and opened for discussion. After the discussion, the board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

- Approval of deviation from the adopted calendar

- o On 9/5/25, due to an assumption and a communication error with administration, PreK and Kinder students were not in attendance.
 - o Previously, a different specific start date for PreK/K was established on the calendar for adoption. This wasn't established for the 2025-26 school calendar.
 - o Seeking retroactive approval for the deviation.

Mr. Wilkinson moved to retroactively approve the school calendar to reflect that there was no school for the PK and Kindergarten students. It was seconded and opened for discussion. After the discussion, the Board voted all in favor. The motion carried.

Information Items

- New Policy - First Reading

There was a first reading of recommended policies 5123 Employer Verification of Employee - requires verification of citizenship or work authorization (strike 3-day requirement) and recommended policies 5252 Notice of Nonrenewal of Nontenured Teacher for Financial Reasons - Nonrenewal.

- Action Plan for Goals (Administrative & Board)

The Board reviewed the Action Plan - SMART Goals, agreed upon goals of Community Outreach – Connection, Internal Staff Support, Curriculum, Future Growth, and Facilities. There was a discussion on the timeline for future review. It was determined that the Administrative Goals will be drafted to fit these Board / District goals. There was a discussion to work on this at the monthly work sessions.

- Proposed student activities for Constitution/Citizenship day (9/17/25) and Freedom Week (last week of September)
 - Staff are planning on reviewing a number of our founding documents - the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Amendment process, as well as activities around the Pledge of Allegiance, National Anthem, Civics, Representation, etc.
 - All Activities will be conducted at the grade level and approachable to student understanding.
- Committee Meeting dates/times established.
 - Facilities/Future Planning - Kevin and Chris
 - Curriculum - Keith and Jacy
 - Policy/Legislation - Kevin and Chris
 - Financial - Jacy and Kevin
 - Community Connection

Public Comment

Reports

- PTO Report-Whitney Cook
Whitney Cook reported on the PTO Events. The events included: a Classroom Door Decorating Contest 9/19-9/22, and Family Night/Chili Cook Off at Fritz Corn Maze on 10/3, Trunk or Treat event Oct 24th with a candy drive, Volleyball Concessions, and No Host PTO night at Sacred Waters fundraiser. The PTO is looking at ways to fundraise for the 7th/8th-grade history trip.
- Teacher Report – Mrs. Baker, 3rd Grade
 - *Morning walks before school- Achieve Respect Fun Freedom-
 - *Collaborative Classroom reading curriculum (outside reading)
 - * Eureka Math curriculum (morning math) multiplication bootcamp
 - *Field Trips – swim lessons, Bio station, Central School Museum
- Principal's Report – see attached.
- Superintendent Report
 - Montana School Funding updates
 - School Funding Interim Commission received a recent proposal and recommendation from CAMPS (Coalition of Advocates for Montana's Public Schools), of which the board and administration are affiliate members.
 - Bridged Health Alliance - Health Care Trust has partnered with Allegiance Healthcare to handle Pub.

Public Comment

Adjourn

There being no further business before the board, Mrs. Magers moved to adjourn, seconded. At 8:06 pm, the meeting adjourned.

Board Chair

District Clerk

Helena Flats Principal Report 9/16/25

Student Achievement and Learning

- Assessment and Grading:**

- Jessica Mielke will be building the test coordinator, Mike will remain the district test coordinator, and MAST Math Testlets have been scheduled, which were due by 9/12/25. MAST rostering for classes is taking place after 9/12/25 when the state completes updating students to it from our student information system.
- MAST Testlet windows and parent information have been sent out to the district as per Montana OPI guidelines
- District Test Security requirements have been completed and sent to Montana OPI.
- State and District test results were sent out before the completion of the 24-25 school year. The results from the Montana Science Assessment will be sent out at the beginning of this school year.
- Developing a Testing Calendar to be shared with staff and families.
- Work on the adoption of the new Science curriculum with feedback this school year

- Classroom Instruction:**

- We developed a 25-26 Staff Evaluation schedule, and the certified evaluation begins in the last couple of weeks of September
- We developed and shared a format for field trips to include 1 per grade level, which is required, with a possible 2 more that are optional. We will see how this impacts the transportation budget this school year. We also developed a calendar for field trips so the whole staff can track who is taking them and when.
- We developed paraprofessional schedules to meet special education and Title intervention student needs, as well as 3rd/4th-grade support.
- Constitution Day, along with Freedom Week, etc, has been communicated with teachers, and they will share what they are doing in their classes as part of the Superintendent Report.

- Professional Development:**

- All staff are completing Suicide Awareness and Prevention training as required by the state. We gave time for this on 8/26/25 as part of our initial staff training.
- Staff will work on State Test Training as well as Title Intervention Work on our School Collaboration Day on 9/26.
- We had 3 additional staff get First Aid/CPR certified before the school year. This is in addition to approximately 20 staff members last school year. The training is good for 2 years.
- Setting up a MANDT. Our school has shown a need for this training, and it is imperative for school safety.
- Beginning of the School Year Staff Training days 8/25 and 8/26 went very well. We focused on school culture by working on the "Dignity Index" and "Happiness." Some paraprofessionals also participated in the staff training on a volunteer basis.
- We developed a Professional Learning Community (PLC) calendar for staff to meet, and PLCs have already begun.

- Attendance:**

- Communication of the attendance policy to families to help increase student attendance.

Culture and Climate

- Student Behavior/Discipline Data:**

- Continuation of proactive incentive behavior plans will continue this school year. We are starting with approximately 3 this school year.
- We adjusted the HFS Behavior/Consequence Matrix to reflect current practices.
- We had two Parent/Student meetings before the start of the school year to put interventions in place for Tier 3 students.
- **School Initiatives:**
 - We are discussing the implementation of a new Tier 1/2 system for grades 5-8. Currently, PK-4 uses the PAX program. We are allotting staff time during our School Collaboration Day on 9/26 for this work.
- **Student Celebrations:**
 - Student award assemblies each quarter, which focus on the Chief Codes of Conduct for awards.
 - We are having 2 pep assemblies this school year, close to the end of each semester.
- **Staff Celebrations:**
 - Our staff had a wonderful start to the school year

Athletics and Activities

- **Athletics:**
 - We had a follow-up Girls Volleyball meeting on 9/3/25. We met in the spring before this school year as well.
 - We met with Keith Johnson, our new PE teacher, to discuss Athletic Director duties as well as school responsibilities. He is eager to be a part of the team. We are working together on the Athletic Director's planning and organization.
 - We are using a new system, "Arbiter," for acquiring officials for volleyball and basketball.
 - Basketball Coach contracts will be confirmed at this September's school board meeting.
- **Activities:**
 - The Staff and Community Meet and Greet on Tuesday, 8/26, from 3:50-5:50 pm. Went extremely well with a lot of participation. We had a table to explain Title interventions, a table for Helena Flats PTO, and a table for our new after-school program.
 - Big Creek for 6th grade is taking place on Monday, 10/6, and Tuesday, 10/7. (1 overnight)

Safety

- We are looking to complete an Evacuation Drill this school year. We are scheduling drills to include Fire, Earthquake, Shelter in Place, and Lockdown. We completed a fire drill the 1st week of school on 8/29.

Communication

- **Student:** morning and video announcements for students
- **Family:** Chief Chatter updated and shared monthly. Website updates continue.
- **Teacher:** Daily emails to staff
- **School District:** Social Media updates and district emails are continuous to ensure communication to families

Facilities

- **After School Program:** our new after-school program with details will be put in the August Chief Chatter to communicate with families.
- **Reader Board:** We are in talks with Helena Flats PTO and Pepsi to get a digital reader board.
- **Gym:** We are happy the resurfacing is complete

