

Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind

COVID-19 Emergency Measures

1906

Student Instruction and Services

The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy to govern during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the delivery of education services to students onsite at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind, offsite at other locations using available resources including but not limited to online methods. The student life director, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement this policy.

As outlined in the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Policy 2100, and except for students determined by the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind to be proficient using the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind assessments, the adopted calendar has a minimum number of 720 aggregate instructional hours for students in kindergarten through third grade; 1,080 hours for students in fourth through eleventh grade and 1,050 hours for students in twelfth grade.

The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind may satisfy the aggregate number of hours through any combination of onsite, offsite, and online instruction. The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind administration is directed to ensure that all students are offered access to the complete range of educational programs and services for the education program required by the accreditation standards adopted by the Board of Public Education.

For the purposes of this policy and the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind calculation of ANB and “aggregate hours of instruction” within the meaning of that term in Montana law, the term “instruction” shall be construed as being synonymous with and in support of the broader goals of “learning” and full development of educational potential as set forth in Article X, section 1 of the Montana Constitution. Instruction includes innovative teaching strategies that focus on student engagement for the purposes of developing a students’ interests, passions, and strengths. The term instruction shall include any directed, distributive, collaborative and/or experiential learning activity provided, supervised, guided, facilitated or coordinated by the teacher of record in a given course that is done purposely to achieve content proficiency and facilitate the learning of acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities by, and to otherwise fulfill the full educational potential of each child.

Staff shall calculate the number of hours students have received instruction as defined in this policy through a combined calculation of services received onsite at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind or services provided or accessed at offsite or online instructional settings including, but not limited to, any combination of physical instructional packets, virtual or electronic based course meetings and assignments, self-directed or parent-assisted learning opportunities, and other educational efforts undertaken by the staff and students that can be given for grade or credit. Staff shall report completed hours of instruction as defined in this policy to the supervising teacher, building principal, or district administrator for final calculation.

Students shall receive grades for completed coursework in accordance with the grading scale for the individual staff member or the alternative grading procedures outlined in the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Policy 1902.

The Board of Public Education may revise the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind calendar to adjust the completion of the school year for particular grade levels and groups once students have satisfied the required number of applicable aggregate hours.

In order to comply with the requirements of the calendar, the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Policy and Section 20-1-301, MCA, Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind shall implement the instructional schedules and methods identified in this policy.

NOTE: Select all of the Options the Board of Public Education decides to implement in the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind in reference to the manner in which educational services will be provided to students at Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind. Option 3 should be selected to accompany Option 1 and Option 2. Using proficiency-based learning in combination with onsite and offsite instruction protects funding if an audit determines that aggregate hours have not been provided. Proficiency determinations should not be used to cease instruction, only to backup and enhance instruction.

School Facility as Instructional Setting

The Board of Public Education authorizes instruction of students at the school facility in a manner that satisfies the aggregate number of instructional hours outlined in the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind adopted or revised calendar for a school year affected by a public health emergency. All educational and related services provided at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind facility shall be completed in accordance with the health and safety protocols outlined in the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Policy 1905.

Offsite and Online Instructional Setting

The Board of Public Education authorizes offsite and online instruction of students in a manner that satisfies the aggregate number of instructional hours outlined in the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind adopted or revised calendar for a school year affected by a public health emergency.

Offsite and online delivery methods shall include a complete range of educational services offered by the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind and shall comply with the requirements of applicable statutes. Students completing course work through an offsite or online instructional setting shall be treated in and have their hours of instruction calculated in the same manner as students attending an onsite institutional setting.

The Board of Public Education authorizes the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Superintendent to permit students to utilize an offsite or online instructional setting at parental request if onsite instruction is offered by the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind. Students receiving offsite delivery of education services may be eligible for assistance with accessibility to offsite or remote learning opportunities.

Proficiency-Based Learning

The Board of Public Education authorizes proficiency based ANB calculation in situations when a student demonstrates proficiency in a course area as determined by the Board of Public Education using the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind assessments consistent with the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind adopted Plan of Action, Policy 1005FE, or other measures approved by the Board of Public Education during the course of a school year affected by a public health emergency.

The Board of Public Education waives the minimum number of instructional hours for students who demonstrate proficiency in a course area using district assessments that include, but are not limited to, the course or class teacher's determination of proficiency as defined by the Board of Public Education. This determination shall be based on a review of the student's completed coursework, participation in course delivery, and other methods applicable to the specific course or class. The Board of Public Education authorizes the use of the proficiency determination process for students who have selected this method of delivery, students for whom the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind is unable to document satisfaction of the required minimum aggregate number of hours through the offsite or onsite methods outlined in this policy, or other students whom the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind personnel determine satisfy the definition of proficient or meeting proficiency.

This provision is based on the declaration by the Montana Legislature that any regulation discriminating against a student who has participated in proficiency-based learning is inconsistent with the Montana Constitution.

Special Education and Accommodation of Disabilities or Diagnoses

Students shall receive services in accordance with the applicable Individualized Education Plan 34 or Section 504 Plan based on methods and locations agreed upon and documented by the applicable team to meet the student's needs and goals. The supervising teacher or building administrator shall coordinate with parents and the special education staff or cooperative to ensure all applicable statutes are followed in accordance with U.S. Department of Education guidelines.

Student Attendance

The Board of Public Education authorizes the supervising teacher, building principal or district administration to set an attendance policy for students that takes into account the location of instructional services, the applicability of proficiency-based instruction, the student's grade level, and the health and safety of the student and their household. Students are expected to complete assigned work. If a student is not present for the instructional day, the student shall be permitted to complete all work assigned by the teacher if not present for instruction within a reasonable period of time determined by the teacher. Students shall not lose credit or incur a grade reduction for reasons related to attendance without good reason as determined by the Board of Public Education.

Student Safety and Counseling

Students shall have access to regular Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind counseling services whether their instruction is provided in an onsite, offsite or online setting. Staff shall promptly report any suspected student distress or concern to their supervisor for review and referral. Students receiving instruction in an offsite setting are governed by the staff obligation to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Homeless Students and Students in Foster Care

This policy in no way limits or adjusts the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind obligations to homeless students or students in foster care. Applicable the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind policies serving these students, or this population of students remain in full effect.

Student Discipline

This policy in no way limits or adjusts the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind expectations for student conduct. All applicable policies and handbook provisions governing student conduct remain in full effect.

2021-2022 School Schedule and Calendar

It is the objective of the Board of Public Education to ensure the proactive operations of the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind during a public health emergency by: (1) meeting the educational needs of the students; (2) complying with all applicable statutes and rules pertaining to the aggregate hours of instruction; and 3) identifying and implementing innovative methods to meet educational and other needs of each student at the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind.

Legal Reference

Article X, Section 1, Montana Constitution
Section 20-1-101, MCA – Definitions
Section 20-1-301, MCA – School Fiscal Year
Section 20-9-311, MCA – Calculation of Average Number Belonging
Section 20-7-118, MCA – Offsite Provision of Educational Services
Section 20-7-1601, MCA – Transformational Learning –Legislative Intent ARM 10.55.906(4) – High School Credit

Cross Reference

Policy 1005FE – Proficiency-Based Learning
Policy 1902 – Alternative Grading
Policy 1905 – Staff, Student, and Community Health and Safety
Policy 2100 – School Calendar
Policy 2140 – Guidance and Counseling
Policy 2161 – Special Education

Policy 2168 – Distance Learning
Policy 2410 – Graduation
Policy 2420 – Grading and Progress Reports
Policy 2421 – Promotion and Retention
Policy 2150 – Suicide Training and Awareness
Policy 3125 – Homeless Students
Policy 3122 – Attendance Policy
Policy 3310 – Student Discipline

Policy History

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