

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."

DUE DATE:

First Monday in March

COUNTY: YELLOWSTONE

DISTRICT: INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 52

LIST EACH SCHOOL THAT IS REQUESTING THE VARIANCE: INDEPENDENT ELEMENTARY

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.

10.55.704 and 10.55.705

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.

This is a renewal of a variance that was previously approved. The initial process started with a determination that the district budget could not support the additional administrative requirement. The situation was described in newsletters during the lead up to the original application. Teachers, parents, and Trustees all were invited to provide input, but the bottom line remains the same, state funding does not provide for the required administrative FTE, especially when other needs are factored in, like class size and special education needs. NOTE: For the 2018-2019 school year, the district had to add an additional Special Education teacher.

See attached Board minutes. No public comment was received.

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.**

See attached Board Minutes and Newsletters. No public comment was received.

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.**

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).**

The initial objectives are listed below. The reality is the district chose not to implement the variance. The district was able to contract with the previous administration at a significantly reduced amount to perform the duties of Superintendent at .5 FTE. However, it is doubtful this situation can sustain itself as the individual wants to retire. Therefore, an extension of the variance is desired by the district.

"The most critical objective of this variance request is to reduce the cost of school administration. The current Standard requires 1.5 FTE administrators is estimated, for FY 2020, to cost \$143,000 assuming the district could find someone who would actually want to work the .5 FTE. Under the variance of 1.0 FTE for FY 2020, the cost of district administration would be \$92,000. Thereby saving the district of \$51,000. In addition, there are numerous performance objectives that can be sited which can be carried out by one administrator.

A few of those are listed below.

1. The Superintendent/Principal shall attend 100% of School Board meetings serving the role of advisor as prescribed in School Board policy.
2. The Superintendent/Principal shall conduct at least one formal observation of each of the 18.5 FTE certified staff on an annual basis.
3. The Superintendent/Principal shall complete all reports required by the Office of Public Instruction.
4. The Superintendent/Principal shall monitor student behavior.
5. The Superintendent/Principal shall publish a periodic newsletter.
6. The Superintendent/Principal shall carryout all duties assigned by the Board of Trustees and the State of Montana. "

- 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.**

As stated above, the variance was not implemented, however, the principal data point of cost savings on unnecessary administration is still in play. This variance was requested in order to allow the district to provide a cost effective, bureaucratically efficient, and educationally sound administrative model. The goals of the variance were as follows (1) provide cost effective administration, (2) reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, and (3) provide an educationally sound administrative model.

To that end, the district will save approximately \$51,000 in unnecessary administrative costs.

- 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).**

None.

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

Mission and goals are the same as the initial variance.

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

Measurable objects are the same as the initial variance.

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

Data or evidence gathered in the same manner as the initial variance.

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

The renewal variance will meet the specific needs of the students in the same manner as the initial variance.

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

- a. Workable**

Renewal variance is the same as the initial variance.

b. Educationally sound.

Renewal variance is the same as the initial variance.

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

Renewal variance is the same as the initial variance.

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


Renewal variance is the same as the initial variance.

Required school district signatures:

Board Chair Name: Renae Scott

Board Chair Signature:  Date: 1/17/19

Superintendent Name: William Laurent

Superintendent Signature:  Date 1-16-2019

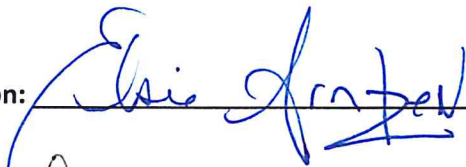
Mail the signed form to:

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

OPI USE ONLY

Superintendent of Public Instruction:

Approve Disapprove

 Date 4/15/2019

Board of Public Education Chair

Approve Disapprove

 Date 5/08/19

Variance to Standards Request to Renew
Addendum

To: Variance to Standards Review Committee

Fr: Bill Laurent, Superintendent

Re: Additional Information

Honorable Committee Members,

I have submitted on behalf of the district a renewal application for a Variance to Standards. Upon reflection, I realized some additional information might be helpful to the committee. I have included below that additional information.

Item #1: Questions that may need up-to-date information.

- 7. List at least one specific measurable objective(s) that demonstrates that the proposed variance will meet or exceed the results under the current standard(s).**

The most critical objective of this variance request is to reduce the cost of school administration. The current Standard requires 1.5 FTE administrators and is estimated to cost, at a minimum \$143,000. This assumes the district would employ a full time person who would serve as .5 FTE Superintendent/.5 FTE Principal and another person who would serve as .5 FTE principal. **The cost under the current standard would be estimated at \$143,000. The cost with approval of the variance would be \$92,000, or a savings of \$51,000.**

In addition, there are numerous performance objectives that can be sited which can be carried out by one administrator. A few of those are listed below.

1. The Superintendent/Principal shall attend 100% of School Board meetings serving the role of adviser as prescribed in School Board policy.
2. The Superintendent/Principal shall conduct at least one formal observation of each of the **19.7 FTE certified staff** on an annual basis.
3. The Superintendent/Principal shall complete all reports required by the Office of Public Instruction.
4. The S/P shall monitor student behavior.
5. The S/P shall publish a periodic newsletter.
6. The S/P shall carryout all duties assigned by the Board of Trustees and the State of Montana.

Note: A copy of the job description is attached (See initial application.)

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

The data collected to document the primary objective is readily available through a review of the district expenditures. If the proposed variance is approved, district expenditures for school administration shall be reduced by a minimum of \$51,000. This can be verified by comparing proposed budgets.

The additional performance items mentioned can be documented as follows:

1. The District Clerk shall document attendance at all Board meetings.
The Superintendent/Principal will report to the Board of Trustees the number and dates of the formal observations.
- OPI monitors report submissions.
4. A student behavior log shall be kept.
5. Copies of the newsletter shall be retained for review.
6. The Board of Trustees shall evaluate the performance of the S/P on an annual basis.

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

This variance allows the Board of Trustees to meet the specific needs of students by allowing the allocation of resources to areas that directly impact students including instructional aides, up-to-date textbooks, additional certified staff to reduce class size, etc. All of these become options when resources (dollars) become available as a result of the reduction in administrative FTE.

10. Variance to Standard: Outline how and why the proposed variance would be:

Workable. (Sufficient district resources are available for the success of the variance.)

This variance allows the Board of Trustees to meet the specific needs of students by allowing the allocation of resources to areas that directly impact students including instructional aides, up-to-date textbooks, additional certified staff to reduce class size, etc. All of these become options when resources (dollars) become available as a result of the reduction in administrative FTE. This variance is very workable. The district has operated for the past 27 years with one person serving as Superintendent/Principal. Independent School is funded at the K-6 level. The variance, which saves the district approximately **\$51,000** makes the general fund budget workable and allows for sufficient resources to assure the success of the variance.

Current Data on General Fund Budget

FY16 \$5285/pupil

FY17 \$5675/pupil

FY18 \$6080/pupil

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b. Educationally sound. (Applicant has relied on sound research as a rationale for the variance.)

Educational research is generally positive when it comes to small schools. The concept of one district, one school, and one administrator is an example that reflects the small school model. Specifically, the District has been unable to find any research on the assignment of administrators, superintendents or principals, to K-6 independent elementary districts. The district requests as much data as OPI can provide as to the development of the numbers that guided the creation of the current standard.

Enrollment Information

2016-2017 301
2017-2018 292
2018-2019 315

The district is growing at a rate of 2% over the last ten years.

Achievement Data

The district uses the AIMSWEB reading comprehension and number sense fluency data to monitor student achievement.

2016-2017 Grades 2-6 students at benchmark: 90% reading, 92.5% math
2017-2018 Grades 2-6 students at benchmark: 89% reading, 89% math

Note: 17% of students are identified as special education.

FTE Data

2018-2019 21.2 Certified FTE

This figure includes a 1.0 FTE Principal and a .5 FTE Superintendent. It would obviously be reduced by the approval of the variance.

Variance to Standards Request to Renew Addendum

Demographics

Independent School District #52 is located in northeast Billings, Montana, approximately one half mile north of the Billings city limits on HW 87. It serves a suburban/rural population of approximately 2500 residents with a school population of **315 as of January 2019**. Medium household income is \$77,500 and the medium house value is \$196,000. The percentage of students on free and reduced lunch is currently **21%**.

The district operates only one school within its boundaries. Montana Code considers Independent School District #52 a K-8 Independent Elementary School District. Independent Elementary is a K-6 elementary school with an enrollment of 320 students. Students in grades 7-8 (80+) attend middle school in Billings School District #2. Independent School District #52 pays tuition for those students.

Independent Elementary employs **14** full-time classroom teachers, 2 full time special education teachers, a full-time librarian, and part-time music, physical education, Title I and counseling positions. **(19.7)** As of 2017-2018, the district also employs a full-time principal and a half-time superintendent.

Parent My Voice Survey Results

This survey seeks to identify the key elements of the student/school relationship. It is part of the Eight Conditions that make a difference in the lives of students.

Parent Voice Survey 2018

BELONGING

I feel welcome in my child's school: 95%

HEROES

My child has a teacher who is a positive role model: 96%

SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

My child is encouraged to practice good citizenship: 96%

Fun & Excitement

My child enjoys being at school: 94%

CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY

My child feels comfortable asking questions in class: 86%

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SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

My child wants to do their best at school: 98%

LEADERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY

I encourage my child to make decisions: 100%

CONFIDENCE TO TAKE ACTION

I believe my child can be successful: 100%

Summary

As noted in the initial variance request, the district asks to be allowed to operate with one administrator. The school size, both certified FTE and student enrollment, falls on the cusp of both administrator requirements. The current certified FTE of 21.2 is at the lower end of the required (18-30) for a .5 FTE Superintendent and the student enrollment of 315 is at the lower end required (250-549) for a full time principal. The data reveal the school is on solid academic and social ground. Going forward there is no reason to believe this will not continue with one person serving as administrator.

Submitted by

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Laurent".

Bill Laurent, District Superintendent

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
NOVEMBER 26, 2018**

A regular meeting of the Board of Trustees, Independent School District #52, Yellowstone County, Montana was held in the library. The meeting was called to order by Chair Renae Scott at 7:29 p.m.

Members present: Renae Scott, Jake Detling, Joe Lierow, David Nedrow and Jamee Wilson. Also present were Superintendent Bill Laurent, Principal Sheila Chouinard and District Clerk Debi Orelup.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

*A motion was made to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2018 meeting as presented.
Motion – Joe Lierow / Second – David Nedrow Unanimous vote*

COMMUNICATIONS

Building Use Requests

Michelle Reiter requests approval to use the gym beginning now through February 28, 2019 on two nights per week for 5th grade girls traveling basketball practice. *A motion was made to approve the request pending receipt of their insurance certificate and with the days and times of use to be determined by school administration. Rental fee is \$10 per hour.*

Motion – David Nedrow / Second – Joe Lierow Unanimous vote

PRINCIPAL REPORT

- Teaching staff are taking part in a book study of Fostering Resilient Learners by Kristin Souers.
- Request additional Special Education Instructional Aide for student requiring one-on-one support.
- Annual evaluation of teaching staff has begun.

OLD BUSINESS

Review Policy 305, Sexual Harassment & Sexual Misconduct

Bill submitted the policy to MTSBA for review. MTSBA's recommendation is to drop the clause referring to the obligation to investigate which is on page 5 under section 305.12 Reporting Procedure. *A motion was made to strike the clause as recommended by MTSBA and approve the final reading and adopt Policy 305 as presented.*

Motion – David Nedrow / Second – Joe Lierow Unanimous vote

Superintendent Evaluation

Renae stated she is waiting for one more trustee to turn in the evaluation form. She can then prepare a summary of the evaluations and meet with Bill to review and discuss it.

Long Range Facility Planning

Bill received information from the District's insurance provider that they will cover hail damage only to the slopes of the shingled roof with damage, not the entire roof. The dollar amount is unknown at this time. Bill recommends the Board form a committee to review the insurance appraisal and determine follow up action to proceed with repairs. Dave and Jake volunteered to be members of the committee. *A motion was made to appoint Dave and Jake to a committee to review the roof inspection, insurance appraisal and start the required process to call for bids, select a contractor, etc. to initiate the necessary roof repairs.*

Motion – Joe Lierow / Second – Jamee Wilson Unanimous vote

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Current enrollment is 311 students.

NEW BUSINESS

Hire Special Education Instructional Aide

Sheila is requesting approval to hire an additional Special Education Instructional Aide for a student who needs one-on-one support. **A motion was made to approve hiring an additional Special Education Instructional Aide.**

Motion – David Nedrow / Second – Jamee Wilson Unanimous vote

Renewal of Accreditation Standards Variance

The current Accreditation Standards Variance expires June 2019. Bill recommends the District reapply for the variance which would allow one individual to serve as the Superintendent/Principal should it be necessary. **A motion was made to direct the administration to pursue the renewal of the Accreditation Standards Variance.**

Motion – David Nedrow / Second – Jamee Wilson Unanimous vote

OLD BUSINESS

Long Range Facility Planning

Dave stated Tim Nesson contacted him regarding a property for sale in the District which he thought the Board may be interested in considering for future growth. The property is located north of the school and west of Hidden Lake subdivision. The Sierra Heights subdivision which the Oaklands are developing is in the area where there is the most growth potential and probable enrollment increase making it the more logical area to consider for a future school location. Also this area already has water and sewer services. Joe suggested the Board form a committee to explore acquiring property to prepare for future growth and increased enrollment. Dave explained the Board did just that a few years ago but the levy which would have provided funding for the planning stage expenses failed. Joe asked that the information collected by that committee be shared with the newer trustees for future reference. Debi stated the information from previous board meetings, emails, etc. can be collected and distributed to the current board members.

The next regular School Board meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. on Monday, January 7, 2019. Payroll checks 81512-81535 and warrants 28494-28545 were approved for payment as presented.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.


Debi Orelup, District Clerk


Renae Scott, Chair