

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: Flathead

DISTRICT: Bigfork

LIST EACH SCHOOL THAT IS REQUESTING THE VARIANCE:

Bigfork Middle 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.

Library and Media Standards as defined in 10.55.709

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.

Please see attached letters.

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.

Please see attached letters.

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).

Bigfork Elementary and Middle School combined campus has a 1.0 FTE librarian. Combined enrollment numbers put us about 111 student over the 1.0 FTE for Library and Media standards requirements. We are requesting approval for a .5 FTE Library and Media variance from the standard defined in 10.55.709.

Approving the variance would allow for the combined continuation of instructional technology/media arts 1.5 FTE, leveled reading material and Wonders "walk-to-read" supports for every K-5th student 1.0 FTE (equivalent of 2.5 instructional paraprofessionals) and librarian services (1.0 FTE) to remain in the K-8 rotation."

Additionally, Bigfork High School serves just over 350 students 9th-12th grade on the same campus as the Bigfork Elementary and Middle School. Although Bigfork High School is at the lower end of the student requirement, 1.0 FTE is employed for Library and Media Services. We believe the total 2.0 FTE librarians as well as the combined supports mentioned above more than **satisfy the spirit of the requirements.**

- 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.

Please see Principal letters.

- 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).

Please see the attached letters.

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

It is our intent to ensure students are fulfilling the Montana Content Standards for Library Media and Information Literacy through a collaborative approach including grade level access and instruction, technology/media instruction and a comprehensive literacy program facilitated by homeroom teachers.

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

- *K- 4th grade students will be scheduled for library services on a rotation to consist of no less than 25% of total electives opportunities.
- *5th - 8th grade students will be scheduled for library services through grade level master scheduling or consist of no less than 15% of total elective opportunities.
- *6th grade students will receive (2) two periods of ELA services with (1) period having a specific literacy focus.
- *5th and 8th grade students will have weekly access time available to both the K-8th library, as well as the high school library.
- *K through 5th grade students will participate in Wonders "walk-to-read" programs ensuring they have continual access to leveled resources and assessment.
- *K-4th grade students will be scheduled for technology/media services on a rotation to consist of no less than 25% of total electives opportunities.
- *5th-8th grade students will be scheduled for library services through grade level master scheduling to consist of no less than 20% of total elective opportunities.
- *3rd-8th grade students will be provided Chromebooks at a 1:1 ratio, so that homeroom and core course teachers can incorporate media literacy standards across curriculum.

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

Elementary and Middle School master schedules and rotation schedules will be reviewed annually to ensure measurable objectives for each grade level are fulfilled.

Cross curricular inquiry/research standards will be evaluated by content department and reflected in curriculum development documents as well as individual evaluations.

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

Please see attached letters.

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

a. Workable

The vast majority of our proposed variance objectives are established practices or norms within each course or grade level. Adjustments have been discussed, reviewed and edited in fulfillment of the variance application process.

b. Educationally sound.

The additional supports defined in this request more than offset any limitation possibly incurred through the .5FTE shortage. Specifically, ARM 10.55.1801 (1) (a) (i-iii) speak to the importance of flexibility, collaboration of staff while modeling and supporting appropriate and ethical use of information. The fact our plan to compensate the .5FTE shortages requires these standards and sub-standards be a central focus only enhances the realities will be fulfilled.

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

The vast majority of the Library Media Program Delivery Standards defined in ARM 10.55.1801 and outlined in the basic program description will continue to be fulfilled by our 2.0 FTE librarians.

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

N/A

Required school district signatures:

Board Chair Name: Paul Sandry

Board Chair Signature: _____ Date: _____

Superintendent Name: Tom Stack

Superintendent Signature: _____ Date _____

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: _____ Date _____

Approve Deny

Board of Public Education Chair _____ Date _____

Approve Deny

Mr. Stack and et. al.,

RE: Variance to Standards Review Board-2023

I have been the librarian at Bigfork Schools for 18 years. During my tenure, I've made it my goal to have the library be the learning hub for the community within our schools. Being at the helm for so long I can attest to how we, the two librarians, are meeting the needs of all of our students K-12th grade. Bigfork Schools is one beautiful campus with two buildings, therefore, two libraries. We are currently split into K-8 and 9-12 respectively. It is my understanding that the state sees our schools at 3 schools: K-6, 7-8 and 9-12. Currently the K-6 school has 467 students, the 7-8 school has 148 students and the 9-12 school has 346 students respectively, that being said, it looks like the 7-8 school is the school in need. It is always the 7-8 school that vacillates in numbers, usually between 130 to now our highest at 148. The need for a middle school librarian is shown by our middle school being over by 22 students. Mrs. Bonner sees the Kinders through 4th graders daily for specials and the 5th-8th graders on a weekly basis. While I normally only see 9-12th grade students, two years ago we made arrangements for 8th graders to have access to the high school library on a weekly basis as well. This was due to the fact that we are currently in a growth period, but over the last 20+ years, Bigfork has gone up and down in enrollment. It is this very reason that the Library Variance was implemented, and I feel very fortunate the state recognizes libraries and their importance, but also realizes that sometimes staffing a .5 person has its limitations.

While I would never discourage my school district from staffing our libraries to meet accreditation, I am fully confident that Mrs. Bonner and I are working within our best interest for the school and staff to meet the needs of our growing student population. Mrs. Bonner and I continually develop and evaluate our programs. We continually collaborate with classroom teachers and technology specialists to make sure we are meeting our standards. Therefore, please grant us another three-year variance where at that further date our school can make appropriate staffing accommodations and adjustments.

Sincerely,

Scarlett Sherman



Scarlett Sherman

Librarian | Bigfork High School

site: mtsc.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/BFHS

email: scarletts@bigfork.k12.mt.us

To Whom it may concern,

On behalf of the proposed library variance for Bigfork Schools. As you can see through our application and past variances, we at Bigfork Schools take library and media services and standards very seriously. Not only do we achieve the intent, we surpass the standards through several technology and media related classes, which encourages collaboration and allows Bigfork Elementary and Middle School students to experience learning opportunities within the Library and Media Standards. Additionally, we have been able to expand opportunities for Middle School library access and support through shared high school resources and staff. Because we believe the technology/media opportunities we have are meeting the spirit of the Library Media FTE standard, and because we believe the high level of staffing committed to Library and Media standards would exceed the expectations established through 10.55.709, we are in support of a continued variance for .5 FTE Librarian at Bigfork Schools.

Thank you,

Brenda Clarke Elementary Principal

Charles Appleby Middle School Principal

Mark Hansen High School Principal

Julie Bonner, Teacher Librarian

This is my eighth year as teacher librarian in the Bigfork School District. After classroom teaching for over 20 years, I completed a Masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction and also obtained a Library Media Endorsement through Montana State University.

The elementary students in our schools receive library instruction as a special and additionally, computers from a Technology Specialist. We collaborate to ensure standards are met and meet to plan lessons and discuss student needs.

In addition, I work closely with the middle school English teachers to ensure our middle school students receive opportunities to access the library. I assist in book selection and am able to recommend books and share resources with our high school librarian as well. Because we are part of the MSC (Montana Shared Catalog) students are able to search for a book and see if it is available at our high school or nearby public library location. Our campus lends itself to students traveling between the high school and elementary/middle school campuses as needed.

Teachers and students also have access to a large Leveled Library housed within our library. Students in grades four through seven, are encouraged to participate in Montana Battle of the Books which allows them access to a variety of genres and supports their growth as readers. We hold an on site competition and winners go on to compete in Missoula with other schools in our state.

Time is given for collaboration with teachers to assist struggling or advanced students. Small groups may visit the library to move into varied sections of the library or a book club may be recommended. Meeting students' needs as readers is an emphasis in our school and in our library we hope to foster a love for reading and being curious learners.

December 16, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

As a parent of two Bigfork Elementary students, it is my strong belief that our school library exceeds all expectations when it comes to providing students with learning opportunities and exposing them to the resources within a school library. In the few years that my children have been in school, they have grown to have such a love of books and reading, and so much of this is because of our school library. Students rotate to library as part of a "specials" rotation once a week. The excitement my children have on library days to explore books and learn about their school library never fails to put a smile on my face. A school library is not only a place for students to find great mystery and adventure through the pages of a book, but is also a place to provide them with endless educational resources!

Sincerely,

Tabatha Venezia

Julie Kreiman
185 Bear Hollow Dr.
Bigfork, MT 59911
julie4bigfork@gmail.com

January 3rd, 2023

Office of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing as both a Bigfork School District trustee and the parent of three students, grades 3 through 7, that attend Bigfork Middle and Elementary Schools. I am in full support of the continued variance that allows us one full-time librarian at the elementary and middle school campus. My view is based on my observations as a parent over the past six years, the full-time elementary computer teacher that we have on staff, and the unique collaboration that we have with our high school campus and its proximity to the elementary and middle school campus.

For years I have had the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Bonner who serves as the K-8 Librarian. I have volunteered to help at the bookfair annually, and the structure and materials the library provides students with is remarkable. Mrs. Bonner is extraordinary and gets to know all the students and builds a rapport with them. During the spring of 2020 when schools closed, she even mailed individualized letters to each student. My kids have library weekly and are always bringing home a variety of grade appropriate books that they have checked out. In addition to the library staff, K-5 students also rotate to computers as one of their regular specials. I have been impressed with the projects that my kids have completed in computers, and they enjoy working on the coding activities that they have learned at school from home. Finally, Bigfork School District is fortunate to have its high school and elementary campuses next door to one another and as a result the staff collaborate to meet the educational needs of students. My seventh-grade student attends one of his courses on the high school campus daily. Our two full-time librarians similarly collaborate to ensure that our middle school and high school students have access to adequate library resources.

I encourage you to approve the variance that is already in place and working well. It allows us to prioritize staffing where it is needed.

Sincerely,



Julie Kreiman