

Public Charter Application Cover Page

New Public Charter under existing local school board OR New Public Charter District

NAME: Yellowstone Experience School, this entity shall hereinafter be referred to as 'YES'.

Local school district in which the public charter school will be physically located: Livingston School District

Contact Information for the Governing Board Chair:

Contact Person: Name, Title

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Contact Information for the Person Completing this Application:

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Local Board of Trustee Evidence:

Approved by existing local school board OR Refused approval by existing local school board
Provide copy of local school board minutes as evidence.

Executive Summary: Yellowstone Experience School, 'YES'. **Opening Date:** August 2025

YES provides a hands-on, meaningful approach to academic, social-emotional, and community impact education for students ranging 5-18 years old, or kindergarten to 12th grades.

The school is structured into 4 multi-aged classroom group levels, Lower Elementary (K-3rd), Upper Elementary (4th-6th), Junior High (7th-9th), and High School (10th-12th) with 10 students per each age group and 2 teachers per classroom group. YES provides academic education for a minimum of 130 students to a maximum of 390 students.

YES is innovative in our district in connected culture, K-12 focused track of blended direct instruction with applied/ experiential use of concepts and skills, year-round 8am-5pm calendar, and rigorous professional development schedule.

YES teachers work in teams to implement a blend of Montessori, Project-based Learning, STEAM, and Forest School pedagogy to create a curriculum that is integrated across subjects and meets MT K-12 Content Standards.

Public Charter Application

NAME: Yellowstone Experience School, this entity shall hereinafter be referred to as 'YES'.

Opening Date: August 2025

Public Charter Term Length: 5-year

Grades to be served: K-12

Minimum Enrollment Per Year: 130

Planned Enrollment Per Year: YR1 - 130, YR2 - 200, YR3 - 270, YR4 - 330, YR5 - 390

Maximum Enrollment Per Year: 390

Plan to Serve: Elementary Program, Middle Grades Program & High School Program

	Elementary							Middle	High School					
	Lower El				Upper El									
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Year 1	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	130
Year 2	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	10	10	10	10	10	10	200
Year 3	30	30	30	30	20	20	20	20	20	20	10	10	10	270
Year 4	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	20	20	20	20	20	20	330
Year 5	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	390

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

1. State the public charter school's mission and vision and describe why this initiative is important to the community it will serve.

Our mission is to empower students to build the knowledge, skills and character to succeed in life through a whole-child hands-on and experiential approach to learning. YES is a supportive learning community that develops personal and collective responsibility, creativity, innovation, and peace; lending to a more sustainable future for all.

Vision: YES students are deeply engaged in and invested in their own learning. With a foundation of knowledge, strong sense of self, and connection to community - YES public charter graduates are prepared for lifetime success and are empowered to live a life of well-being and productive citizenship.

The establishment of YES as a public charter is important to Park County because:

- **Quality Alternative - Education for All Students** - Despite the positive programming that existing public districts provide, demand for an innovative, individualized educational option is growing, reflected by the trending increase in student enrollment in homeschool and

private school programs. Students are opting out of the current traditional public option in Park County. [In 2024, of the total reported K-12th school age students, 399 students or approximately 20% of Park County students, are opting out of public school and instead are participating in home school, private schools, or hybrid educational programs.](#) Park County public school enrollment is at its lowest in recent years. There are several contributing factors influencing this decline in public school participation, including political climate, COVID impact on enrollment, increasing micro school options, changing demographics, housing issues, fear of extremism and violence, concern of bullying, religious choice, etc. In addition to these societal factors, families and students have identified the need for school choice to close achievement gaps between high-performing and low-performing groups of public students. Specifically, parents and students are taking responsibility for their own success and experience by moving towards a student-centered approach to education. Those students and families are opting out of traditional options and are pursuing and developing alternatives that better meet their individual needs.

- **Equity** - Parents alone cannot pay the true cost of comprehensive, enriching education providing vast opportunities for students to thrive. Students opting out of the public option due to diverse needs and learning styles are entitled to a public education. Each student deserves a high quality education to provide a foundation of knowledge, skills and confidence, despite ability to pay.
- **Suicide Prevention** - Park County continues to witness youth suicide. Studies show that students who feel connected to a community or purpose and have a connection to at least one adult are at reduced risk of suicide, (<https://sprc.org/effective-prevention/comprehensive-approach>). The YES structure of low student-to-teacher ratio and multiple years with the same teaching team allows all students to experience strong relationships with healthy adults and peers, as well as meaningful, individualized educational experiences that students care about. The smaller school community, low student-to-adult ratio, and individualized and meaningful learning opportunities provide the community, meaningful adult relationships, sense of purpose, and healthy self-esteem, known as major protective factors (based on a [Montana Youth Dynamics article](#)).
- **Increased Public Dollars for Education in Park County** - Schools are underfunded and under-resourced to meet the diverse needs and demands of all of our unique students. Families with students in search of options that fit individual needs for success and opting out of the public option are paying for private education. Not all working families have the ability to pay for individualized education to meet their child's needs. YES public charter would bring in additional public investment to educate Park County students through alternative programming. An additional public option will bridge the equity gap between learners who would thrive in a hands-on learning environment and those whose families cannot afford the time and money it takes to provide these essential services without additional public options.
- **Relevant Approach to Education to Serve Diverse Needs and Challenges of the 21st Century** - It is more important than ever that we re-imagine learning environments that provide opportunities for interest-driven exploration, creativity, collaboration, and development of relevant life skills. It is this knowledge base and foundation that empowers

kids with a 'can-do mindset' to support their purpose and contribute as citizens. Young people want to feel valued and connected and want the knowledge, ideas and skills to achieve goals to live their best life. People all over the world are articulating that the skills to succeed now include excellent communication, healthy relationships with self and others, creative capacity for problem solving, and the agency to accomplish goals. Children are facing many unmet future challenges and opportunities and will need to become the citizens and leaders with the hearts, minds, and skills to face those challenges and contribute to positive solutions. Montessori pedagogy, with emphasis in Project-based learning, STEAM, and forest school is an educational approach recognized for building general wellbeing, engagement, social trust, and self-confidence, which prepares students to think critically, dream big dreams, and contribute to a better world as happy, healthy, and fulfilled people.

2. Identify the targeted student population and the community the public charter school proposes to serve.

YES provides a hands-on, meaningful approach to academic, social-emotional, and community impact education for students ranging 5-18 years old, or kindergarten to 12th grades.

The school is structured into 4 multi-aged classroom group levels, Lower Elementary (K-3rd), Upper Elementary (4th-6th), Junior High (7th-9th), and High School (10th-12th) with 10 students per each age group and 2 teachers per classroom group. YES provides academic education for a minimum of 130 students to a maximum of 390 students.

The YES public charter student population is structured as mixed-age and distributed generally equally by age group. YES is responsive to student enrollment demands. Enrollment may vary within an age group reflective on demand year-to-year.

Enrollment capacity will expand from 130 to 390 students enrolled over 5 years to ensure staffing, occupancy, and organizational capacity grows to support the increased numbers of students for optimal individualized growth and learning outcomes.

YES works with the intention of being an integrated school that is representative of the demographics of the larger community of Park County. YES welcomes all learners and does not discriminate based on ability, race, gender, or socio-economic status. YES students may include: Socio-economically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities, Students who identify as Dyslexic, Visual, and Neurodivergent Learners, Homeless Youth, Latino or Hispanic students, White, Black or African American students, students of two or more races, students of Asian, Filipino, American Indian, or Alaska Native Pacific Islander heritage.

Students who will thrive in the YES learning environment and culture are receptive to small-group, mixed-age, individualized learning opportunities with a hands-on approach to Montana Core Curriculum Standards.

3. Describe plans and timelines for student recruitment and enrollment, including lottery procedures.

Student Recruitment

Public outreach about YES along with an Intent to Enroll began in June 2024. Since that time, ___ children have expressed an intent to enroll. Upon state approval, YES enrollment will be advertised in the local paper, social media posts, posters, notification to parents at local events, news releases to all local media outlets, and existing parent email lists.

YES shall provide or publicize to parents and the general public information about YES public charter school as an enrollment option within the district to the same extent and through the same means that the district provides and publicizes information about non-charter public schools in the district.

Admissions information will be available on the YES website, yeslivingstonkids.com. Paper applications will also be available at YES school. Open enrollment will begin January 15th, 2025 for the 2025/26 academic school year. Enrollment will close April 15, 2025 if applications meet or exceed student capacity. If applications do not meet capacity, rolling admission will be open until filled.

A parent or guardian must complete and submit a simple, non-discriminatory application form by a published deadline before the ending of the open enrollment period and sign a statement agreeing to abide by all policies and procedures set forth in the Student & Parent Handbook.

Admissions Priorities

- YES public charter school is open to any student residing in the state, with preference to students who are residents of the located school district.
- A school district may not require a student enrolled in the school district to attend a public charter school.
- YES public charter school limits admission to students within the ages of 5-18 yrs old, grade levels K-12th.
- YES public charter school is organized for students interested in a hands-on, project-based K-12th education.
- YES public charter school shall enroll all students who wish to attend the school unless the number of students exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building.
- If capacity is insufficient to enroll all students who wish to attend the school, YES public charter school shall select students through a lottery for all students on a waiting list.

YES public charter school may give enrollment preference to:

- (i) students who were enrolled in the public charter school the previous school year and to siblings of students already enrolled in the public charter school. An enrollment preference for returning students excludes those students from entering a lottery.
- (ii) children of members of a public charter school's governing board and full-time employees, limited to no more than 10% of the school's total student population.

This section does not preclude the formation of a public charter school for the purpose of serving students with disabilities, students of the same gender, students who pose a sufficiently severe disciplinary problem to warrant a specific educational program, or students who are at risk of academic failure. If capacity is insufficient to enroll all students who wish to attend such a school, the public charter school shall select students through a lottery.

Admissions Lottery

If YES receives more applications than there are spaces available, a public, computerized lottery will be held to determine admissions. Notification of the lottery date will be made to the public and members of the public will be able to witness the computerized lottery process. Within the context of this admission process, YES seeks to deliver on the spirit and intent of Brown vs. Board of Education by using legally-permissible means to enroll a profile of students representative of the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of the region where YES operates. In this regard, YES employs certain weighting mechanisms in relation to its computerized lottery that foster diversity and that fit squarely within acceptable admissions protocols.

Acceptance, Notification and Waiting Pool

Once the initial openings have been filled using the procedures described above, YES will notify chosen applicants and inform them of their option to enroll in YES. Applicants who have not been chosen will have their names maintained within the applicant waiting pool. As additional openings become available after the initial stage of drawing names, names will be drawn from the waiting pool in keeping with YES's admissions policies as delineated above. When names are drawn, YES will notify the applicants that they have the option of enrolling in YES. Notifications will give applicants at least three full business days to inform the school of the applicant's intentions. In the absence of an affirmative and timely response by phone, letter, or email, YES will eliminate the applicant from consideration and draw another name from the waiting pool. The applicant waiting pool expires annually at the end of the formal academic year, or as otherwise determined by the Yellowstone Experience School Board.

4. Describe the public charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in your school district. Include plans to formally assess student achievement on an annual basis.

YES is innovative in our district in connected culture, K-12 focused track of blended direct instruction with applied/ experiential use of concepts and skills, year-round 8am-5pm calendar, and rigorous professional development schedule.

YES is innovative in our organizational design; mixed-age classroom structure; a culture and strong focus on individualized, engaging student experience; and a high fidelity academic experience that facilitates an applied, meaningful approach to academic proficiency through community projects and experiential learning opportunities.

YES offers an educational experience for kids ages 5-18 prioritizing three main growth and development outcomes.

- **ENGAGEMENT:** Academic and skills proficiency of MT K-12 Content Standards approached through meaningful real-world, experiential learning. All community members find meaning, purpose, and value in what they are doing through real world projects that provide civic engagement and improvement. Creating joyful, playful, and fun experiences that allow for choice and encourage curiosity and creativity. Continuously providing challenging opportunities to build skills, knowledge, and character to best support each individual.
- **CONNECTION:** All community members build a healthy relationship to self, others, and place. Students build a strong sense of self through developing non-violent communication skills, self-knowledge of interests, strengths, and boundaries, while building caring, trusting relationships; all community members build their identities as learners and develop the capacity for agency and autonomy. This allows all to feel valued, empowered, seen, and included in our diverse community. Also, building connection to our natural and built/historic environment by visiting and participating in these spaces.
- **CITIZENSHIP:** Civic engagement and connection to community through relevant projects that explore authentic community challenges and opportunities and empowerment to take action to make change. Through this students become compassionate change agents working together to make our communities better, practice reflection to gain awareness of ourselves and others. This allows us to practice listening to others to make informed decisions that impact more than just ourselves.

These YES Guiding Characteristics lead our Board of Trustees, administration, teachers, parents, and learners in development and implementation of curriculum, instruction, field studies, assessment, professional development, planning, calendar, and budget.

Curriculum Design

YES teachers work in teams to implement a blend of Montessori, Project-based Learning, STEAM, and Forest School pedagogy to create a curriculum that is integrated across subjects and meets MT K-12 Content Standards, and will evolve to meet [OPI's 2026 revised core content standards](#) to best support student learning, parent involvement and support, and teacher efficacy. The Montessori curriculum, developed over 100 years ago with research supporting its success and the flexibility of tailoring it to each individual student, will be the basis for our academic learning. Project-based learning is a real-life approach to academic standards that engages students in their learning for application and use of concepts over a lifetime. Combined with YES Guiding Characteristics, teachers at YES create and direct diverse, innovative curricula in pursuit of in-depth understanding and application of concepts and competencies through personalized and project-based learning practices.

YES teachers create learning experiences designed to foster deeper learning competencies in students, aiming for:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

- Collaboration
- Effective Communication
- [Self-Directed Learning](#)
- Healthy Growth and Development Resulting in Self-Regulation, Resilience through Challenges, and Autonomy
- Healthy Relationships to Self and Others and Sense of Inclusion in Supportive Community
- Growth Mindset
- Proficiency and Deep Understanding and Application of Core Academic Content

Structures that Support Curriculum and Project Design for Strong Student Learning Outcomes

YES works diligently to provide a foundation that is a high fidelity experience with outstanding Montessori and project-based instruction, STEAM, Forest School, and interdisciplinary curriculum to our teachers so that all educators may achieve effective teaching practices for the greatest student-learning outcomes. Work is curated publicly in YES facilities and social media to make products and processes transparent.

To promote excellence in curriculum and project design across all of YES and with each teacher, YES places great emphasis on professional development and adult learning. All new faculty participate in an intensive training/on-boarding week that includes experiential learning, workshops, project tunings, and collaboration time with experienced faculty or professionals. Teachers engage in ongoing professional development through weekly meeting time and dedicated staff days to support and realize the YES mission.

YES prioritizes learning from the students through observation and engagement, then using that information to guide their learning spaces. YES has structures for collegial coaching, as well as official mentor-mentee partnerships for teachers undergoing orientation.

Classroom Structure and Culture/Mindset

Through a partnership in teachers that lasts for up to three years and a supportive, inclusive school community culture, all students are known well by their teachers, engage in and create meaningful work, and are challenged to develop growth mindsets as they meet high expectations at YES.

Students are encouraged to think of themselves as inquisitive, resilient, and capable lifelong learners, and to develop a sense of belonging in academic and real-world settings. From the early years forward, technical careers, university attendance, and application of diverse strengths and interests is part of the discourse at YES, where faculty and students demystify and discuss the college path or other successful uses of passions, skills, and purpose as an accessible, viable goal.

Assessment for Growth and Achievement

YES will use Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST) assessment to track academic growth and proficiency for 3rd-8th grade students.

- **Montana Aligned to Standards Through-Year (MAST) Assessment** - Montana's ELA and mathematics assessment for students in Grades 3 through 8.
- **Montana Science Assessment (MSA)** - Montana's science assessment for students in Grades 5 and 8.
- **ACT with Writing** assessment - Montana's ELA, mathematics, and science assessment for high-school (required for Grade 11 in Montana).
- **Multi State Alternate Assessment (MSAA)** - Montana's ELA and mathematics assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SwSCD) in Grades 3 through 8.
- **Alternate Montana Science Assessment (AMSA)** - Montana's science assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SwSCD) in Grades 5, 8, and 11.
- **ACCESS for ELLs Assessment** - Montana's English Language Proficiency assessment for English Learners (EL) in Grades K through 12.
- **Alt ACCESS Assessment** - Montana's English Language Proficiency assessment for English Learners (EL) with significant cognitive disabilities in Grades K through 12.

Assessment will be provided 4 times throughout each school year.

Window 1: October 14-November 22, 2025

Window 2: January 13-February 21, 2026

Window 3: March 24-May 2, 2026

Window 4: May 5-May 23, 2026

YES will also use [Aims+](#) for K-12th students to provide a thorough assessment for both knowledge and foundational phonics and phonological skills as well. YES will also use Aims for benchmark and progress monitor Pre-K-12th core content math standard skills.

Assessment will be led by an independently contracted, certified by MT OPI for standards assessment.

Learning Metrics

YES also uses [Individualized Learning Plans \(ILPs\)](#) as roadmaps for each student's education plan. ILPs document student learning, stakeholder observations and priorities, and social, emotional, and academic goals. ILPs are created by teachers in partnership with students and parents and are a structure to document planned action to achieve goals and measure growth and proficiency. The intention of ILPs is to capture each student's unique learning needs and interests, strengths and opportunities for growth. Thereby, students, parents, and teachers are clear and invested in academic and social-emotional goals with a place where proficiency and growth can be measured. ILPs recognize, measure and validate skills and strengths beyond MT state standards to broaden the metrics that reflect student success so that kids feel seen, successful, and validated in gifts not measured in traditional systems.

ILPs are developed during conferences prior to each learning arc and are used to revise goals and measure growth throughout the year with students, parents, and educators. They are available to students when a student is struggling with giving themselves direction as a reminder of what they chose to be striving for in school.

YES begins each school year assessing students for proficiency and competency of skills. Upon teacher completion of teacher assessments and observations of academic, social-emotional, and student strengths and passion areas, teachers schedule meetings with students, parents/guardians, and teachers to set individualized, collective goals for the quarter and entire school year.

The academic, physical, social, and competency goals are mapped out with steps and milestones to measure growth, proficiency, achievement gaps in growth and proficiency, and post-secondary readiness.

The YES ILP proficiency scale is used in assessment to communicate and describe each student's growth and progression along a continuum of learning. All ILPs will reflect academic and social development proficiency, individual strengths, and areas for growth with strategies to support and deepen learning.

- Emerging - The student demonstrates an initial interest in the concept and has received direct instruction and modeling of the skill. Students work with ongoing support (through direct instruction or independently with materials that support the skill).
- Developing - The student demonstrates a basic understanding of concepts and is further exploring and practicing the skill. Students may need some additional support from guides, but ideally from a peer.
- Mastered - The student demonstrates a deep understanding of concept and experienced level of skill mastery for use and application in real-world application and goal achievement. Students can support the learning of others. [ILP Template](#)

5. Describe any variances to existing standards that the public charter school requires to enhance educational opportunities.

YES learning is based on the [Montana OPI K-12 Content Standards](#) and also integrates social developmental standards, and citizen-developed community goals.

Students are grouped in multi-age classrooms, providing opportunities to receive and apply instruction within a range of curriculum levels. This accommodates students above, at, and below grade-level and decreases the need for mis-identified IEP evaluations and services. This approach also reduces negative personal perception, related behaviors, and resistance to learning for students who have not yet met grade-level proficiency.

6. Describe the instructional design, including the type of learning environment, class size and structure, curriculum overview, and teaching methods.

Instructional Design and Teaching Methods:

YES teachers work in teams to implement a blend of Montessori, Project-based Learning, STEAM, and Forest School pedagogy to create a curriculum that is integrated across subjects and meets MT K-12 Content Standards. YES uses three key integrations that unify YES' educational programming and approach to curriculum. These integrations reflect YES' belief of how learning best occurs.

- A. Integrating Students: YES' instructional design is rooted in its commitment to serving students from across the academic spectrum in a fully integrated environment. Rather than separating students on the basis of perceived ability, students work alongside peers from widely different backgrounds. Underlying this approach is a belief that heterogeneous grouping benefits students from across the academic spectrum. Rather than mis-predicting students' future trajectories on the basis of perceived academic ability, YES prepares all of its students for success in a four-year university and beyond.
- B. Integrating School and Community: YES learning environment extends well beyond the walls of its classrooms to leverage educational opportunities in the community. Students investigate authentic problems and challenges in the community, conduct scientific and ethnographic research in the field, partner with adult professionals, and create products that benefit stakeholders.
- C. Integrating Hands and Minds: Students at YES use technologies and authentic tools to engage in scientific, mathematical, literary, historical, and artistic pursuits. Both academic and technical strands are strongly in evidence at YES.

YES includes general guidelines and recommendations for the teaching methods and material, based on Montessori and project-based learning pedagogy. However, varied working methods support and direct the learning. YES provides teacher discretion to choose working methods suitable for different ages and various learning situations and in interaction with their students.

The selection of teaching methods may also be used to support collaborative learning where competence and understanding are developed with others. The students are guided in acting in various roles, sharing tasks among themselves, and assuming responsibility for both personal and shared goals.

The individual and developmental differences between students is also taken into account in the selection of teaching methods. This kind of differentiation of instruction is based on the teacher's knowledge of their students' personal needs.

Learning should take place inside and outside the school. In addition, use of authentic learning materials, tools, and environment are important as these will help the students to both acquire and deepen their knowledge and skills in real and authentic situations and empower students to create new things now.

Learning Environment

- YES classrooms are learner-centered - the emphasis is on the student's choice for engagement and meaning as well as self-assessment to develop students' capacity for self-evaluation, helping them learn to monitor their progress and design their own learning activities.
- Students are expected to take an active role in designing and creating demonstrations of learning to showcase intended proficiency and competencies.
- Students are expected to work collaboratively in teams on projects, and there is a substantial focus on projects that cut across the traditional subject or disciplinary lines.
- The well-being of the individual as a whole human (social, emotional, physical and academic) is supported and is a basis of the curriculum.
- The materials in the classroom are generally self-correcting, allowing learning outcomes to happen naturally without rewards or punishments (grades or other measures).
- Teachers at all levels of education are well trained and strongly committed to their work.
- All teachers are required to have a teaching certificate, real-world professional experience, and Master's degrees are encouraged.
- The teaching profession at YES is valued and supported financially and socially, encouraging excellence in teachers and also encouraging students to pursue education as a career.
- At YES, there is substantial emphasis and value to subject-specific pedagogy for prospective primary as well as upper-grade teachers.

Class Size and Structure

YES class sizes will have 30 students (10 students from each grade, a classroom will range in 3 grades, for example, 4th, 5th and 6th grade) with two teachers. Students will be placed in groups outside of their age-determined grade level if emotionally and academically appropriate in support of the individual student's growth and development as well as with consideration of group dynamics.

The structure of the classrooms will have enough flexibility that if students are exhibiting a need to move that we will be able to support that through outside play or organized activities, such as yoga or dance, or putting movement into the curriculum for an individual child (for example, will you hop across the room to get the letter B card.) However, the classrooms are also rigid enough in routine that the students understand the expectations and are able to meet the expectations that encourage growth, learning, collaboration and community.

Curriculum Overview

YES provides a blended approach to curriculum using Montessori, project-based learning, STEAM, and forest school methods to reach proficiency in the Montana K-12 Core Content Standards for a K-12 education; in addition to competence in social emotional and developmental skills and civics and design thinking. Montessori, Project-based Learning, Forest School, and STEAM applications are demonstrating evidence-based, strong academic proficiency outcomes. [Montessori Charter schools in Colorado show strong math and literacy scores](#); [A study of the impact of project-based learning on student learning effects: a meta-analysis study](#); [New Research Makes a Powerful Case for PBL](#); [A NEW RESEARCH](#)

[BASE FOR RIGOROUS PROJECT-BASED LEARNING](#) [Project-based Learning is Great. But Students Still Need to Learn Something;](#) [The restorative outcomes of forest school and conventional school in young people with good and poor behaviour;](#) [Forest School and its impacts on young children: Case studies in Britain](#)

The following subject areas, in line with a MT K-12 Core Content education, with additional subjects, define the YES Curriculum:

English language arts, English language phonics and literacy, literature, foreign language arts; environmental studies/ ecology, agriculture science; health and nutrition education; speech and debate; history and social studies; mathematics; theater; science (physics, chemistry, biology), geography; physical education; music; visual arts; life skills; financial literacy; entrepreneurship; and grace and courtesy.

The Montessori approach provides materials in the classroom that are diverse to cover (most) of the above curriculum areas that can be used individually, in small groups or classroom projects. The materials in the classroom support the student's learning through being available, prepared, and self-correcting, which allows the students to learn and master a skill at their own pace. The opportunity for experiential learning and community partnerships, provides the resources and materials in addition to classroom materials to offer students a comprehensive educational experience. The students are able to [self-direct](#) their own learning through their daily choices and Individualized Learning Plan goals. The teachers make their assessments through observations and discussions. This cumulative, progressive, self-guided, teacher-supported, and applied learning process, develops a strong foundation of skills and understanding of MT standards.

Each grade level will apply standards skills and knowledge through quarterly, annual, and multi-year community-based projects to engage students through their own interests and connection with our community. These projects develop awareness of community challenges and opportunities, conduct research to understand issues, set goals, design solutions, realize goals, and reflect on the learning process. These real-life projects develop meaningful relationships with community members and empowers kids to see themselves as present change agents. These projects will be developed with the project-based learning coach with teachers to integrate student interests, curriculum standards, and community needs.

For 10-12 grades, there is a strong Project-based Learning focus with a component of partnership with community businesses, such as O'Connor Auto Body or Flying J Ranch, as well as various departments in the Montana State University, to offer [Employment and Internship Opportunities in the Department of Life Sciences- water conservationist, NASA internship, Wildlife management](#), and [MSU Science Math Resource Center](#), where students have the opportunity to learn through real-world business, STEM fields, and organizational skills that are applicable beyond the classroom. These internships, employment, and apprenticeships are facilitated by teachers, an internship coordinator position, and in conjunction with the businesses, organizations, and Montana State University staff to be a pathway to real world success in healthcare, business, social services, STEM, technical fields, and beyond. These

partnerships are a mutual benefit to employers and the university to prepare and recruit students for Montana jobs and future higher education. YES will work with Montana State University to use their guidance, and insights into the proficiencies and skills needed for students to be successful and connect YES students with MSU resources, opportunities, and programming to provide students with the educational opportunities to increase skills and proficiencies. Yes will also seek out and work with local youth workforce innovation programs to help incentivize and provide opportunities for Montana kids to encourage students in Montana to stay in our state when they graduate high school.

YES students will have access to Montana Digital Academy curriculum programming to help fill gaps for specific subject matter that YES or Livingston Public Schools do not provide.

7. Describe plans for identifying and successfully serving students with disabilities, students who are English Language Learners, students who are academically challenged, and gifted students, including compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

The trend of increased percentages of Montana students identified in need of support of additional support necessitates a comprehensive, resourced, focused plan. YES will partner with the Park County Special Education Coop to provide evaluation and support services for YES students.

The Montessori Method, often seen as an alternative to traditional classrooms, caters to a diverse student population. It offers a personalized learning approach, enabling students to explore and progress at their own pace and fostering practical application of their learning. In multi-age classrooms, students interact with peers, gaining varied perspectives on problem-solving and relationships. This approach is particularly effective for students with learning challenges who may need extra time and support for problem-solving. It also benefits those who thrive on personal interactions with peers and teachers. In this flexible environment, gifted students can delve deeper into subjects, pursue their interests, and continually strive for their personal best. Students with identified learning needs receive the necessary accommodations, adaptations and support. Teachers are trained to maintain an open and exploratory classroom atmosphere while being ready to provide individualized support when needed.

YES will use a number of strategies to address the needs of students, whether they have disabilities, ESL, challenged or gifted academically with a wide range of prior experience and achievement.

- **Mixed-Age Classes:** YES' mixed-age classes focus on allowing the child to go at their own pace and to learn from their peers. This allows increased flexibility to spend time gaining mastery over a skill before moving on to a new skill.
- **Staff Meetings and Protocols:** Regular staff meeting time is dedicated to Equity Protocols where teachers have the opportunity to consult with colleagues about students who are struggling and brainstorm additional strategies to support their academic growth. Teachers

critically examine their curriculum and instructional strategies to increase access to and engagement with learning for all students.

- Academic Tutoring: Students may receive tutoring, including organization skills support, from teachers during class. Since the students are moving at their own pace and learning from the environment, teachers have flexibility for more one-on-one instruction, as needed.
- Supplemental School Learning Resources: Supplemental learning materials are made available to students and parents, as needed.
- Academic Coaches and Education Specialists: During the core day, academic coaches embedded in the classrooms provide additional support to students who are struggling within the classroom context. Education specialists, who train and supervise the academic coaches, also spend significant time in classrooms observing students who are struggling academically or socially and collaborate with core teachers, as well as the academic coaches, to devise support plans and strategies.
- Student Support Conferences: When a student is identified to be progressing below the student's ability, a student support conference is called, where faculty and parents/guardians discuss strategies for supporting the student's learning.
- Social Emotional Support Practices: Many students who struggle academically are also in need of social-emotional support. In addition to providing academic support, teachers offer social-emotional support through intentional classroom strategies, including group circles and restorative justice practices. School psychologists/ counselors, social- emotional coordinators, and/or teachers develop and model these practices. School psychologists also coach teachers and consult with staff about specific students who need additional support.

YES meets recommended best practice and Montana public school legal requirements for students with disabilities by following the [Montana Office of Public Instruction Special Education Guidance for Public School Districts](#) and ELs by following the [Montana Office of Public Instruction English Learner Guidance for Public School Districts](#)

8. *Describe student discipline policies, including those for special education students*

YES is guided by the premise that many or most behavior concerns are due to an unmet need for a student. YES staff focus on caring relationships with students through long (3-year) relationships with the student and low-teacher to student ratios so that all students are seen, accepted and acknowledged for gifts and strengths by at least one healthy adult mentor.

Students with special needs, such as learning or physical disabilities, often thrive in a Montessori setting. Materials used in Montessori settings engage all the senses. Students are free to move about the classroom, which is an advantage for those children who require a lot of physical activity. Each child learns at their own pace, and there is no pressure to meet formal standards by a predetermined time.

YES also understand that children may have needs such as learning disabilities, physical needs, emotional stress and anxiety; hunger, relationship stress, isolation, bullying, exhaustion,

disengagement, boredom, thirst, lack of understanding of material, social pressures, lack of communication skills, lack of conflict resolution, need for connection, etc. We will work to ensure these needs are met so that learning may happen more sustainably.

YES regards suspension and expulsion as a last resort. The procedures and documentation that may warrant suspension or expulsion of a student from YES for disciplinary reasons or otherwise involuntarily removed from YES for any reason will be consistent with all applicable federal and state constitutional procedural and substantive due process requirements.

Overview of Disciplinary Actions The purpose of disciplinary action at YES is to ensure that individual students, their parents/guardians and YES community stay focused on growth and learning and are ensured a safe educational environment. Prompt resolution of the problem or issues is expected. Discipline may include any one, a combination and/or all of the following depending on the circumstances, and at YES administration's sole discretion.

- Verbal and/or written warning to the student
- Loss of privileges or removal from extra-curricular activities
- Parent/guardian notification
- A written commitment by the student to improve their behavior and/or performance and/or to take certain affirmative actions to improve
- A meeting with the Dean of Students, Director, or some other school administrator or faculty member
- Academic Consequences
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Denial of Re-admission
- Other forms of discipline that YES may determine appropriate

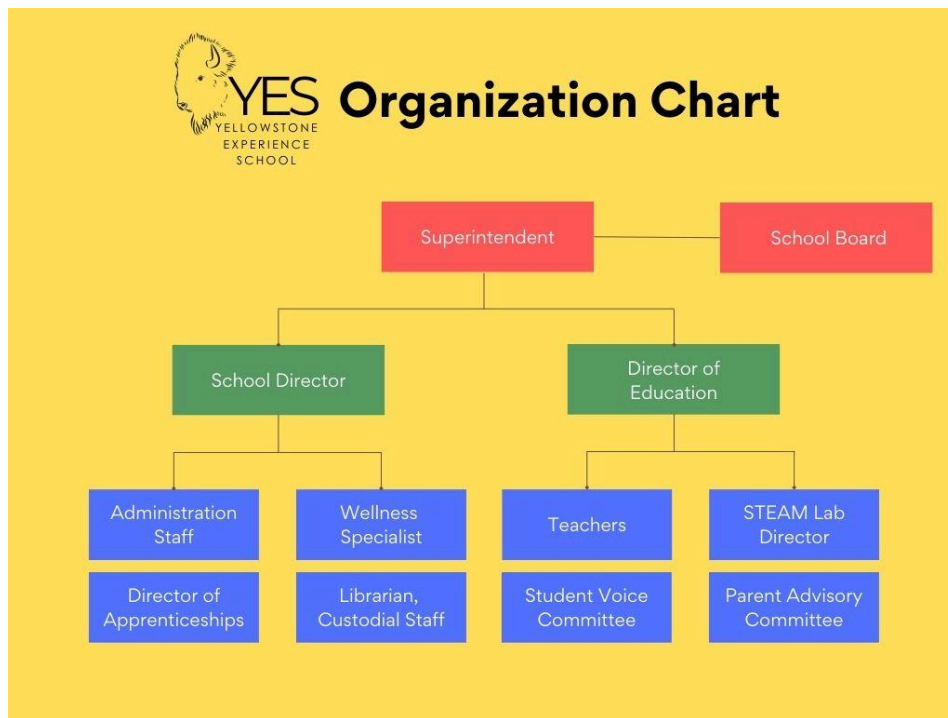
SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

- 9. *Describe the public charter school's organizational chart that clearly presents the proposed organizational structure, including lines of authority and reporting between the governing board, staff, related bodies such as advisory bodies or parent and teacher councils, and external organizations that will play a role in managing the public charter school.***

YES will operate as a public charter school district recognized by the Montana Board of Education and the Montana Office of Public Instruction for public and educational purposes.

YES will be governed by the Schools Board of Trustees. The superintendent will report directly to the board of trustees. Operating under the superintendent is the School Director and Director of Education. These people will oversee all day-to-day operations of all sites.

Each classroom will have a certified licensed teacher. In the event a student has an IEP or 504, content will be modified to include any IEP and 504 requirements to ensure that students are making adequate progress. Each student will have an Individualized Learning Plan based on their goals.



Student Voice and Choice Advisory Committee

Students provide input on what they want to learn, skills they want to develop, and how they learn best to inform YES culture, curriculum, and project development. Student voice and choice is critical in building authentic, ample opportunities for students to build autonomy, develop agency, and develop their identities. This lens allows YES to approach education in a way that puts the student first. The goal is to make sure all students have ample opportunities to develop intellectual agency, build autonomy, and establish their identities as capable, lifelong learners.

Parent Advisory Committee

Community stakeholders provide input on community projects and partnerships.

10. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the governing board, the proposed leadership management team, and other entities shown in the organizational chart.

The Board of Trustees of the Yellowstone Experience School governs over and operates the LEA authorized public charter school. The YES Board has legal and fiduciary responsibility for any charter schools that it operates as well as meeting [MT OPI Accreditation Standards, in Title 10, Chapter 55 \(ARM 10.55\)](#). The YES Board meets at least quarterly and holds its meetings pursuant to Montana statutes. The YES Board is comprised of at least seven

members, in accordance with its bylaws. [The board will meet guidelines in MCA Title 20, Chapter 6. Part 8](#)

School Director -responsible for overseeing all aspects of the school's local operations including responsibility for ensuring that the school's instructional program features full implementation of YES Guiding Characteristics and delivers measured learning outcomes towards proficiency of the Montana core curriculum.

The School Director is responsible for hiring all site-based staff and, working in collaboration with central staff, for preparing a budget for approval by the YES Board.

Teachers -YES is committed to hiring talented, knowledgeable, and passionate teachers as key positions impacting student success. Teachers among the YES charter school represent a range of experiences, including former biotech engineers, community college professors, film makers, and graphic designers.

YES teachers must meet the MT Office of Public Instruction teacher certification requirements and be MT OPI certified. YES teachers are required to hold a class 1-3 certificate, permit, or other document equivalent to that which any public school teacher is required to hold.

Dean of Students – works in close partnership with the School Executive Director to ensure that student safety is maintained at all times and that a culture and standard of discipline conducive to student learning is supported by all site students and parents/guardians.

Yellowstone Experience School Administrative Services- Services performed at the administrative level include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ● YES Board Support | ● Administrative Services |
| ● Governance Support | ● Charter Compliance |
| ● Strategic Planning | ● Community Engagement |
| ● Operation and Fiscal Planning | ● Teacher Credentialing |
| ● Property/Facilities Acquisition/ Financing | ● Curriculum Development Support |
| ● Facilities Design, Renovation | ● Professional Development for Directors and Teachers |
| /Maintenance | ● Program Monitoring, Compliance, and Quality Assurance |
| ● Payroll, Benefits | ● Special Education Services Fundraising |
| ● Human Resources Support | ● Grant Generation/ Fundraising, Development |
| ● IT Services | ● Environmental Health and Safety |
| ● Business Services | ● Proficiency Evaluation |
| ● Lunch Program Operations | |
| ● Enrollment | |
| ● Legal Support | |

11. Provide a staffing chart for the public charter school's first year and staffing plan for the term of the public charter school.

Position	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5
Lower EI Teacher	2	4	6	6	6
Upper EI Teacher	2	4	6	6	6
Junior High Teacher	2	2	4	4	6
High School Teacher	2	2	2	4	6
Directors	2	2	2	2	2
Administrators	1	2	3	3	3
Library	1	1	1	1	1
Custodial	2	2	4	4	4
IT	0.5	0.5	1	1	1
Accounting	1	1	2	2	2
Independent Evaluation contractor	1	1	1	1	1
Parent Liaison	1	1	1	1	1

12. Detail the public charter school startup plan, identifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals.

YES will commence team recruitment upon approval by the MT Board of Education. There is an initial team in place who will carry out the following start up plan.

January, 2025

Founding YES Board of Trustees, will recruit an administrative team and begin advertising for staffing positions including additional members of the administrative team, teachers, and all other staff.

File incorporating documents for the Yellowstone Experience School at state and federal level.

Campus acquisition committee established and members recruited to secure additional campus space.

Administrative staff will begin outreach about YES public community school charter to educate parents, community members, and stakeholders on the newly established public alternative educational approach to MT Core Curriculum academic proficiency. This team will advertise the enrollment process to begin February 15th and end April 15th. Advertisements for teachers and staff positions will be posted and advertised. Student Handbook approved. Board begins the budget process.

February 2025

Student enrollment opens, hiring process continues.

March 2025

Teacher professional development training/ orientation planning for YES charter implementation and curriculum planning. Content and Curriculum Advisory Committee established and member recruitment to commence. Members will include teachers and community members.

April 2025

Additional YES campus location(s) secured.

Teacher contracts signed.

May 2025

Student admissions announced. Parents notified. Enrollment documents collected.

Contracts signed.

June 2025

Supplies ordered. Insurance secured.

Contracts signed.

July 2025

Final enrollment documents and records requests recorded. Budget approved.

13. Describe the plans for recruiting and developing school leadership and staff.

The role a school and its teachers play in a child's life is undeniable. Both influence how children understand the world they live in, their place in that world, and their perceptions of future possibilities.

The intentional recruitment, selection, and development of YES school leadership and staff is the most critical strategy to deliver high student growth and healthy school culture.

The Yellowstone Experience School strives to hire leadership, teachers, and staff with diverse backgrounds, competencies, effective teaching strategies, mastery of and passion for subject area, growth mindset, those from racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Students attending schools with these characteristics are more likely to:

- develop positive identities,
- develop cultural competencies that can combat stereotypes, reduce unconscious biases, and
- develop greater social cohesion.

Additionally, students of color who have teachers of color are also less likely to experience exclusionary discipline practices and are more likely to improve their academic performance and graduate high school. Increasing teacher diversity is thus an effective strategy for creating more equitable learning environments and outcomes for all students. In our increasingly diverse society, representation matters. Research shows that all students benefit from having a diverse group of teachers that come from a variety of backgrounds as they prepare to enter an increasingly global society.

Hiring Process

To recruit, vet, and hire a team with the experience, education, certifications and credentials, skills, and mindset to effectively produce student proficiencies, YES aims to begin the hiring process early; consistently implementing multiple steps in the selection process; and tracking application and hiring data, and differentiating essential candidate criteria for important subgroups of teachers.

YES is committed to hiring experienced, knowledgeable, and passionate teachers as key positions impacting student success.

We will offer full and part-time positions to recruit the best candidates.

We will start recruitment and hiring by reaching out to our local community, specifically the teachers and professionals who have communicated interest and support for the YES model and a desire to work for YES.

To hire additional staff, YES will hold hiring fairs, working with the MT University schools of education, posting positions with other universities and education websites, recruiting from industry, and supporting new teachers through its own credentialing programs.

Interviews are typically followed by a rigorous full-day review during which candidates teach a class (and are evaluated by students), have a luncheon interview with students, and interview with current teachers and administrators. Teachers among the YES charter school represent a range of experiences, including former biotech engineers, community college professors, film makers, and graphic designers.

Leadership Development

School leadership will be provided necessary training to develop skills in: 1. Implementing Mission and Vision 2. Nurturing Relationships, building trust, and creating a culture of care in support of students, teachers, parents and broader community, 3. Effective Implementation, developing consistent structure and supports that uphold mission and desired whole-child outcomes, 4. Continuous Improvement, promoting data-driven learning culture to continuously improve students' academic growth and develop mindsets, habits, and skills important to student success.

Professional Development

[Frequent, in-depth, and applied professional development is critical for effective teaching and strong student learning outcomes.](#)

Yes professional development aligns with the three core values: ENGAGEMENT- delivery of academic skills and knowledge; CONNECTION- healthy social-emotional development and school culture; and CITIZENSHIP- project-based learning process and community partnership for meaningful, beneficial application of academic and social skills and knowledge.

Approximately 10 hours per month/ 120 hours per year of professional development will be delivered to YES teachers each year.

Professional development consists of off-site, school-based, and organization-wide learning opportunities by staff and contracted experts to teach and practice skills, mindsets, and strategies that support the YES mission. By design, professional development is largely contextual, integrated into teachers' day-to-day work and addressing issues that emerge therein.

Annual staff retreats and designated monthly staff days present additional opportunities for school teaching communities to gather and engage in deeper dives on particular subjects.

Morning staff meetings are held at least once a week and afford the opportunity for regular check-ins and discussions about practice. These meetings may include discussions about exhibitions, presentations of learning, assessments, and other topics. Veteran and new teachers have the opportunity to collaborate at morning meetings.

Collegial coaching is another important part of YES' professional development process. Starting at first with observation and consultation by the School Director, colleagues, and, at times, other administrators, teachers are engaged in classroom observation and feedback.

14. Describe the proposed leadership and teacher employment policies, including performance evaluation plans.

[YES Employee Handbook for additional Leadership and Employment Policies](#)

YES employees have the same rights and privileges as other public school employees except as otherwise provided in [sections 1 through 14 HB549.

Teachers and other school personnel, as well as governing board members, are subject to criminal history record checks and fingerprinting requirements.

YES public charter school employees are not required to be members of any existing collective bargaining agreement between a school district and its employees. However, YES may not interfere with laws and other applicable rules protecting the rights of employees to organize and to be free from discrimination.

15. State the proposed governing bylaws.

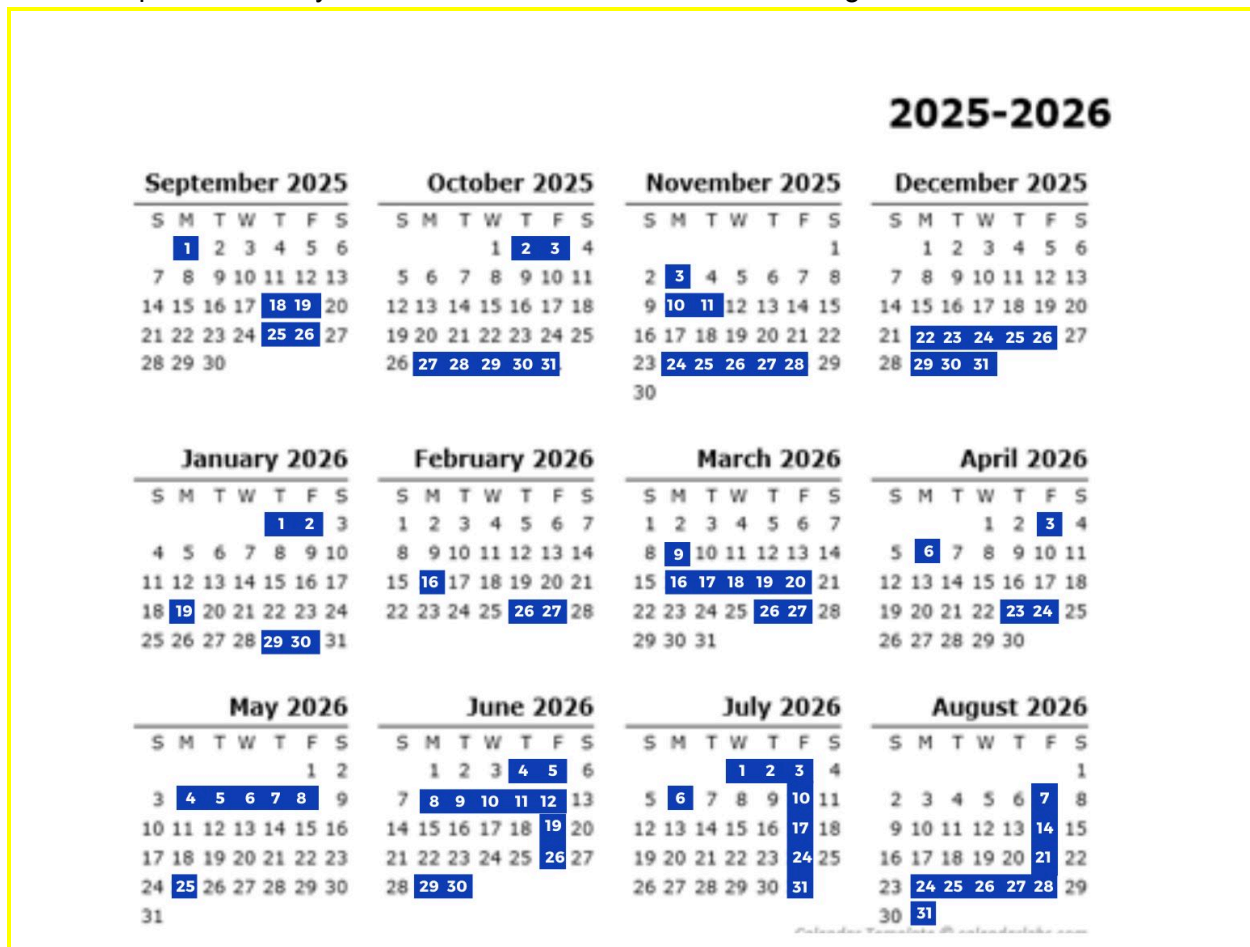
[Amended bylaws provided](#)

16. Explain any partnerships or contractual relationships central to the operations and mission of the public charter school.

The YES public charter will partner in a contractual relationship with the existing Park County Special Education Co-op to provide IEP assessments, evaluations and services.

17. Provide the proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.

YES will operate with a year-round schedule in line with the Livingston Public School District.



Dates highlighted in blue represent non-student instruction days. Summer months follow a 4-day school week, 2 days per month over September - June students don't have school for professional development days.

The daily schedule is 8am-5pm

8am-12pm Direct Instruction and Applied/ Interdisciplinary Learning Rotations: Math/ ELA-phonics/ arts/ sciences/ humanities rotations with integrated sciences and humanities curriculum.

12-1pm Lunch hour for outdoor play, reading, personal and social time.

1-4pm Project-based learning instruction and programming, languages, music, artist in residence, community expert/ craftsperson direct instruction and making, field trips, etc.

5-5:30pm Clean up and daily education, experience reflection

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

18. Describe plans for providing transportation, food service, and all other significant operational or ancillary services.

The YES public charter plans to purchase 15-person passenger vans to provide transportation for students and staff for field studies and equitable transportation to and from school.

Purchases will be aligned with all state of Montana procurement requirements. YES public charter also plans to coordinate with the Livingston and Park County public schools to contract transportation to and from school for students within the bus routes if capacity is available.

The YES public charter will contract with a food service professional to provide a hot lunch program to all students that meets all state dietary requirements for children. Lunches will include all components and quantities required by USDA/CACFP guidelines.

19. Describe co curricular and extracurricular programs and how the programs will be funded and delivered.

YES will partner with existing or new Livingston School District/ private/ public co-curricular programs like LINKS, Livingston District athletic programs, the City of Livingston Recreation Programs, FFA, 4-H, etc.

20. Describe the proposed financial plan and policies, including financial controls and audit requirements.

The Yellowstone Experience School public charter will follow the HB 549 legislative requirements for public charter schools for financial plan, policies and financial controls, and audit requirements. YES will employ accounting staff experienced and or trained in Montana state public school accounting. The [Montana Office of Public Instruction School Accounting Manual](#) will be referenced for guidance and direction on best practices.

Audit Requirements

YES will contract with an independent auditor with experience in education finance, from the Certified Public Accountants Directory published by the State Controller's Office, for an annual financial audit that will be conducted pursuant to GASB STATEMENT No. 84 or other current MT OPI audit requirements.

21. Describe the insurance coverage that will be obtained.

YES will be covered by the same insurance provider as other Montana Public Schools, specifically provided through Montana Schools Property and Liability Insurance Plan administered by PayneWest.

The following policies will be obtained for the Yellowstoned Experiential School: General liability, professional liability, workers compensation, and directors and officers liability policies will be secured. Policies will have \$1,000,000 limits or will meet MCA Title 20 policy limit requirements.

22. Describe the startup and five-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions. The startup and five-year budgets are based on MCA Title 20, Chapter 9, Part 3 funding allocations.

Revenues are based on 70 E2 students and 20 M2 and 40 HS students enrolled. Revenues are increased by 3% each year based on MCA Title 20, Chapter 9 increases between FY 22 & FY23. Additional assumptions made include 9 certified teachers, no data for American Indian enrollment

See xx for 5 yr budgets w clearly stated assumptions

23. Describe the startup and first year cash flow projections with clearly stated assumptions.

Based on estimated FY24 funding allocations through MCA Title 20, Chapter 9, Part 3, first year revenues include _____

Estimated first year expenditures include \$_____, resulting in a contingency of \$_____.

Assumptions include using estimated costs from ERS and Elevate Montessori FY23 expenditures for occupancy, food program, etc.

24. Describe anticipated fundraising contributions and evidence, if applicable.

The projected 5-year Budget fundraising contribution sources include:

Innovative Education Tax Credit: MT State Student Scholarship Organization. An SSO designation allows individuals and businesses to re-allocate their state taxes towards our school scholarship fund. Individual and business taxpayers donate directly to an approved SSO and can receive a tax credit of up to \$200,000 that can be carried forward for up to three years. Your accountant can provide more details. Donations are on a first come first serve basis starting January 1 2025, with a \$5,000,000 limit for all SSOs statewide.

Grants and Sponsorships: We actively seek grants from government agencies, foundations, and private organizations that support educational initiatives, specifically charter start-up costs,

support, and development. Additionally, partnerships with local businesses and community stakeholders will provide sponsorships for specific programs.

Individual Donations:

Community Fundraising Events: To engage the local community, we organize events like art exhibitions, craft fairs, and workshops. These events not only provide valuable support but also foster a sense of community involvement.

In-Kind Donations and Volunteer Support: We actively seek in-kind donations of materials, tools, and equipment from local businesses and individuals. Additionally, volunteer contributions from community members with expertise in various fields will supplement program delivery.

25. Describe the facilities plan, including backup or contingency plans.

The Yellowstone Experience School would like to use an existing Livingston District school facility for the first year of operation to provide direct-instruction classroom space. Our top priority for classroom-style learning space with a unified school campus is an existing public school building in a central location that is accessible for Park County students and families. Washington School, closed due to low enrollment, is our primary preference. This unused school space provides a gymnasium, playground, classrooms, kitchen, bathrooms, and offices. This location of a public school would provide one public school on our northside of the community. Parents with siblings attending YES would enjoy one drop-off location for their children for their K-12th educational journey. According to Section 13. Of HB 549 Public charter school access to district facilities and land. (1) A public charter school district has a right of first refusal to purchase or lease at or below fair market value a closed public school facility or property or an unused portion of a public school facility or property within the located school district.

Washington school is not currently being used by the Livingston School District for M-F 8-3:30pm educational purposes. The building will accommodate first year enrollment projections of 130 students.

YES students will also use different facilities and locations to provide a business/entrepreneurial and /innovation campus where students use an art/ studio, STEAM(science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) labs, and a maker space with tools, science, engineering, and art materials.

We plan to secure an additional agriculture/ ecology campus for students to learn agricultural skills, resource management, and product production best-practices and skills.

Within five years, YES will expand the educational campus to include classroom space, a maker space, and agriculture and open space to create a school campus where students can learn in direct instruction, use expanded technical equipment, and have access to native landscapes

and agricultural space giving students the ability to grow food and learn restoration and sustainable agricultural practices. At this campus, YES teachers and students will grow food, learn about native species, permaculture, food gathering, and study nature to rewild and restore native habitats. This campus with real-world learning opportunities allows teachers and experts to teach kids to live with wildlife and will plant thickets and maintain other wild places alongside garden spaces and near school structures to encourage local wildlife diversity and habitat complexity. This is a living laboratory to develop and practice management practices. Students need consistent access to natural outdoor spaces to explore, play and grow. Time spent during childhood in wild places develops love and connection to our natural world and develops a child's sense of self and relationships with others. Students should be given the most beautiful places to learn and grow which reflect the value we place in them. Students need to feel empowered and autonomous to practice following their curiosities through play in the outdoors- this will support their trajectories as lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and stewards connected to the places they love.

This expansion of the school campus for ecological and agricultural learning will give our educational programming the facilities to model best practices in project-based learning that also develops student character, healthy relationships to self and others, and engagement with the community and local environment.

Our backup plan is to fundraise for an alternative learning space. There is an existing vacant commercial building, the former Livingston Enterprise Building, that is located near the Livingston School District upper elementary, middle and high schools, as well as the Special Education Coop, that lends to students using shared district resources and programs to further complete and enhance their comprehensive educational experience. This building is on the market listed for \$2.2 million and would need some renovation but is close to move-in ready.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEED

26. Describe the specific evidence of significant community support.

According to the October, 2024 Park County Rural Schools Superintendent's Office data, approximately 23% of students reporting enrollment in Park County are opting out of public school. This includes students who are home schooling or attending private schools. Last year, the Livingston Public School District made the decision to close an elementary school due to declining enrollment and to combine students and teachers in another existing school. This is a trend that has been growing over the past several years.

There has been a shortage of teachers across all rural public schools and the Livingston Public School District, possibly contributing factors of workload, culture, lack of resources and support to be successful in the role.

Community support for a public charter in Park County includes homeschool families who can't afford private school but who are looking for an alternative approach to academic proficiency and student engagement and choice. Parents of students who need an alternative and believe in public education support charters. Additional support comes from teachers looking for more autonomy and a different work culture and structure.

Parents of unenrolled and publicly enrolled students would like a publicly-funded, securely-resourced, student-experience and outcome-designed option. Many families struggle to pay tuition for private options and independent programming but continue to consume due to the desired outcomes, experience, opportunities, and overall well-being of their students.

See letters of support in Appendix I.

Parents signed up with intent to enroll _____ students for 2025/26.

27. Describe the opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.

YES secures parental involvement, participation, and input in a variety of ways. For example, the School Executive Director meets formally with parents and guardians at least twice a year regarding Title I spending, YES learning goals and project plans, and MT OPI state laws and compliance. Meeting agendas cover subjects including review and analysis of learning outcome results as well as budget development, as it pertains to Title I funds and state and federal funding.

YES features active parental involvement, as parent involvement is a key factor in student academic achievement. YES has a Parent Association. Activities that the parent association may undertake includes, but is not limited to:

1. Communicating Board meeting agendas and meeting attendance opportunities
2. Creating and distributing a Parent Association Newsletter
3. Sending Parent Association announcements via email and/or other means
4. Meeting regularly and serving as a liaison to other stakeholder groups such as YES's administrators, associated student body groups, and others
5. Sponsoring/supporting community-building activities, such as orientations, school photos, socials, special fundraising events, and community-service activities
6. Supporting classrooms directly, such as Room/Team Parent coordination, teacher wish lists, and chaperoning
7. Coordinating school-wide fundraising, such as book fairs, and other fundraising partnerships with local businesses.

YES engages with stakeholders through family meetings, student and family surveys, and staff professional development each school year. YES begins dialogue regarding learning outcomes and tenets in the fall with a series of family meetings YES goals for that year. The process culminates in a winter/spring meeting where budgets and goals for the YES are discussed.

Families are invited to attend these meetings through email, weekly newsletters, and phone calls made by the family outreach coordinator.

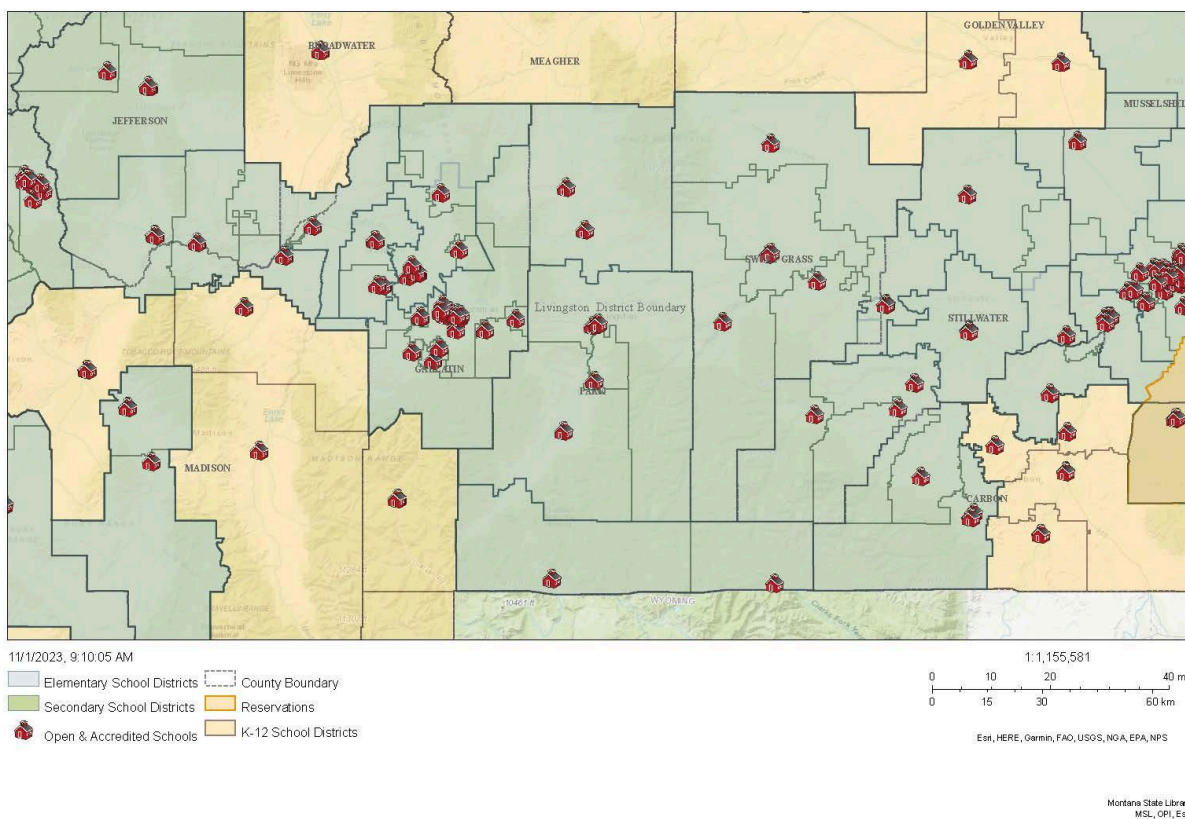
Additional input will be gathered from various stakeholders including parents, students, and staff during multiple meetings with YES school directors.

The issues raised in those contexts will help drive the development of the year's goals. Student voice surveys, focus groups, and individual conversations with students are essential to design and develop student experience and curriculum that meet student needs. An additional source of family feedback will be provided by the YES family survey. The survey is another way to engage families about their experience at YES and develop ideas or specific action plans to better support students moving forward.

NOT AN EXISTING LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD? COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

- 1. Provide specific evidence that the applicant has sought from the local school board the creation of a school or program of the located school district serving the mission and vision of the proposed public charter school.***
- 2. Provide specific evidence that the local school board declined to create the school or program and declined to submit a proposal for the creation of a public charter school to the Board of Public Education.***
- 3. Provide a legal description of the property of the existing school district from which the boundaries of the public charter school district are proposed to be formed.***

Montana School Districts Livingston District



A new district boundary would be derived from the existing district boundary. TBD

4. Share background information on the initial governing board members and, if identified, the proposed school leadership and management team.

This information will be collected and submitted After LSD BOD makes decision on application adoption.