



Montana Board of Public Education

Public Charter School Application

June 2025

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INTRODUCTION

Title 20, Chapter 6, Part 8, MCA, authorizes the establishment of public charter schools in Montana and tasks the Montana Board of Public Education as the sole entity authorized to enter into public charter contracts with a governing board. There are two types of public charter schools – those operating under an existing local school board and those operating as a new school district under a separate governing board. This Public Charter School Application is for both options.

A public charter school means a public school that has autonomy over decisions including, but not limited to, matters concerning finance, personnel, scheduling, curriculum, and instruction as defined in a public charter contract. Public charter schools are governed by a local school board, or in the case of a governing board other than a local school board, by the governing board of the public charter school district of which the public charter school is a part. Public charter schools are established and operated under the terms of a public charter contract and allow parents to choose to enroll their children. Public charter schools must admit students based on a lottery if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated.

Public charter schools provide a program of education that may include any or all grades from kindergarten through grade 12 and vocational education programs and operate in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives as defined in its public charter contract, and must demonstrate a commitment to and robust understanding of personalized and proficiency-based learning.

The evaluation of your application will focus on whether implementing the proposals in your application will lead to the academic, organizational, and financial performance you are promising in exchange for potential broad flexibility from Montana's education standards. The evaluation will determine whether:

- there is an overall intent to create an innovative public charter school;
- there is an overall intent to create a high-performing public charter school;
- the academic program is consistent with a high-quality public charter school;
- the school governance is consistent with a high-quality public charter school;
- the business operations are consistent with a high-quality public charter school;
- the community support and need is consistent with a high-quality public charter school;
- there is clear and convincing proof of the likelihood of success;
- they can open and operate a successful public charter school; and
- there is a commitment to and robust understanding of personalized and proficiency-based learning.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

To facilitate the Montana Board of Public Education's review of public charter school applications, applicants must submit the application to bpe@mt.gov between the dates of October 27-31, 2025, with a deadline of October 31, 2025 at 5PM. All submission materials must be submitted in a single electronic submission. Multiple attachments will not be accepted in the submission. The Board will review the public charter school application, and if determined complete, will facilitate an interview and take public comment on the application. Final approval of the application will take place at the January 2026 Board of Public Education meeting. Please note the timeline on the Board's webpage under the Public Charter School tab.

Please provide a brief, direct response to each question using this application template and limit the application to 26 pages. Any appendices, handbooks, policies, and additional documents will be considered as supporting documentation. Please include links, when possible, and refrain from including lengthier documents.

Please note that submitting a public charter school application does not guarantee approval and that a public charter school contract will be granted. Failure to adhere to any requirements may lead to an incomplete application that is rejected before consideration.

PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Check One: ☒ New Public Charter under existing local school board ☐ New Public Charter District

Name of Public Charter School Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy

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

Miles City Unified School District

Contact Information for the Governing Board Chair

Contact Person: Andy Zook Board Chair
Name Title

Contact Address: 1604 Main Street, Miles City, MT 59301

Telephone Number: 406-234-3840

E-mail Address: azook@milescity.k12.mt.us

Contact Information for the Person Completing this Application

Contact Person: Meghan Brown Superintendent
Name Title

Contact Address: 1604 Main Street, Miles City, MT 59301

Telephone Number: 406-234-3840

E-mail Address: mbrown@milescity.k12.mt.us

Local Board of Trustee Evidence

Check One: ☒ Approved by existing local school board ☐ Refused approval by existing local school board

Provide copy of local school board minutes as evidence.

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:f2f03ce0-7e0e-42f1-af07-4f3a038b2f88>

PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION

Name of Public Charter School: Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy

Provide an executive summary with the general purpose and rationale for the creation of the public charter school, and explain how the proposed public charter school is different from a program that you could operate or are currently operating without the public charter designation.

Executive Summary

The purpose of establishing the proposed public charter school within the Miles City Unified School District is to provide innovative and personalized learning opportunities for students, with the overarching goal of stabilizing enrollment numbers between the October and February count days. By reimagining how education can be delivered to meet the diverse needs of our students, this charter school will serve as both a solution to enrollment instability and a pathway toward improved educational outcomes for students who have historically struggled within traditional models.

The proposed charter school will offer an alternative pathway to a high school diploma that accounts for individual circumstances, learning styles, and life challenges. This approach recognizes that a one-size-fits-all educational model does not meet the needs of every student, particularly those facing personal, social, or academic barriers to success. Through flexible scheduling, blended and online learning options, competency-based progression, and individualized academic plans, the charter school will ensure students can pursue a diploma through nontraditional yet rigorous and meaningful avenues.

Currently, the district operates an alternative school that serves only juniors and seniors who have no other means of graduating. Students with disabilities covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must currently revoke their IEP services to participate, which restricts access and equity for these learners. The proposed charter school will serve students in grades 7–12 and will fully adhere to the provisions of IDEA, ensuring that all students—regardless of ability—have access to appropriate supports and accommodations while pursuing an alternative educational pathway.

In addition, the district presently does not offer online coursework, early graduation options, or accelerated routes to earning a diploma. As a result, students seeking flexibility or advanced pacing often turn to homeschooling or transition between homeschool and district enrollment, contributing to unstable count-day numbers and inconsistent funding. The charter school aims to serve these students by providing a district-sponsored alternative that maintains connection to the public education system while meeting their individual needs for pace, modality, and program structure.

In summary, this charter school will:

- Expand access to personalized, flexible, and innovative learning for grades 7–12.
- Stabilize district enrollment and funding by retaining students who might otherwise homeschool or disengage.
- Provide inclusive and equitable access to alternative education under the full provisions of IDEA.
- Offer online, early graduation, and accelerated diploma pathways not currently available in the district.

Through these efforts, the proposed public charter school will strengthen the district's capacity to serve a broader range of students and ensure every learner has a viable and meaningful path to a high school diploma.

Opening Date: August 24, 2026 Public Charter Term Length: 5 Years
 Grades to be served: 7-12
 Minimum Enrollment Per Year: 21 grades 7 and 8 and 41 grades 9-12=62
 Planned Enrollment Per Year: 62 attending in-person
 Maximum Enrollment Per Year: 80 attending in-person and 100-150 total with fully online option

During the proposed public charter 5-year term, indicate the specific grade-level programs that you plan to serve:

Check all that apply: ☐ Elementary Program ☒ Middle Grades Program ☒ High School Program

For each year of the public charter term, estimate the number of students the public charter school plans to serve in each grade:

	Elementary							Middle		High School				Total
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Year 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	11	10	10	10	11	62
Year 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	11	10	10	10	11	62
Year 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	11	10	10	10	11	62
Year 4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	11	10	10	10	11	62
Year 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	11	10	10	10	11	62

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

See Submission Procedures

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

Charter School's Mission and Vision

The mission of the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy is to provide a flexible, rigorous, and supportive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of students who seek alternatives to the traditional school model. Guided by the District's vision of *Challenging Learners and Supporting Success (C.L.A.S.S.)*, the academy is committed to ensuring every student—whether facing personal obstacles, seeking a homeschool partnership, pursuing credit recovery, or accelerating toward early graduation—has access to high-quality instruction, meaningful support, and opportunities to remain connected to the broader school community. Our goal is to empower students to achieve academic success, develop resilience, and prepare for future educational and career opportunities.

The Miles City School District recognizes that while the traditional, comprehensive middle and high school model successfully serves the majority of students, there remains a significant percentage of learners who require a more flexible, individualized approach. These students may face personal, family, or medical circumstances that prevent them from fully accessing a conventional school day, or they may desire greater flexibility in scheduling and learning pace. Establishing the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy would allow the District to address these needs directly while retaining students within the public school system and ensuring alignment with Montana's educational standards.

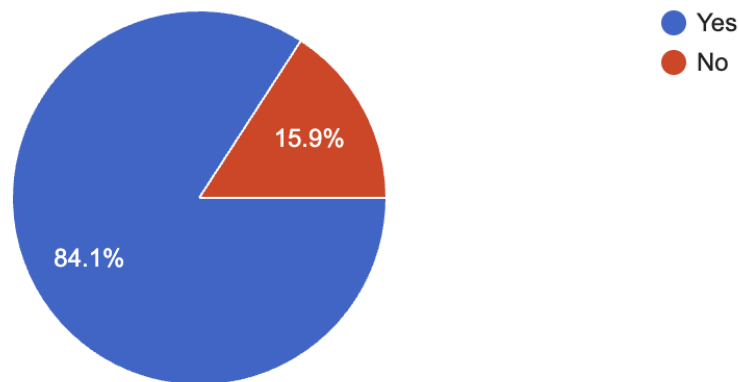
Benefits to the District and Community

- Retains students within the Miles City School District who might otherwise leave for alternative programs or homeschooling.
- Expands the District's ability to meet diverse learning needs without compromising academic standards.
- Provides families with an accredited, locally governed alternative that balances flexibility with accountability.
- Strengthens community engagement by offering broader access to school programs, activities, and resources.
- Increases graduation rates by providing targeted interventions for struggling students and acceleration options for advanced learners.

In a recent survey conducted in late September 2025, stakeholders of the Miles City Public School District were asked to complete a 10-minute survey, which provided more information about the application for a Public Charter School in Miles City, identified the targeted population, sought to gauge community support for a Charter School, and gave an opportunity to request an invitation for students currently in grades 6-11 to apply if the District's application is approved. An overwhelming 84% of stakeholders who responded believe there is a need for this type of school, even if their own child does not fit the targeted population.

Do you see a community need for this type of school, even if your own child does not fit the targeted population?

164 responses



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

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy is designed to serve up to ten percent of the District's middle school and high school student population. The target groups include:

1. **Students Facing Extenuating Circumstances**
Learners who encounter challenges such as ongoing medical conditions, family obligations, or other personal barriers that make consistent attendance in a traditional setting difficult.
2. **Families Seeking a Homeschool Alternative**
Parents and guardians who desire the flexibility of homeschooling but lack access to accredited curriculum, certified instructors, or the resources necessary to ensure their child meets state graduation requirements.

3. **Students Not on Track to Graduate**

High school students who are behind in credits and require an alternative pathway to recover coursework, earn credit, and make timely progress toward graduation. This category includes students who may have withdrawn from school but meet the age requirements by law to return and work on requirements towards a diploma.

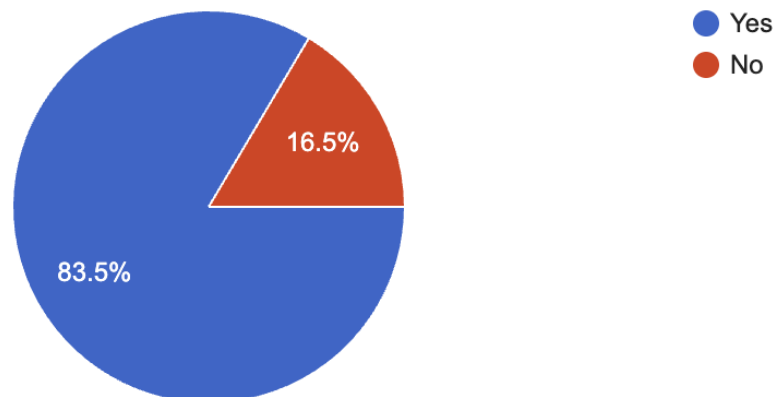
4. **Students Pursuing an Accelerated Pathway**

Learners who wish to progress through coursework at an accelerated pace in order to complete graduation requirements early and pursue postsecondary education, career opportunities, or other personal goals.

In a recent survey conducted in late September 2025, stakeholders of the Miles City Public School District were asked to complete a 10-minute survey, which provided more information about the application for a Public Charter School in Miles City, identified the targeted population, sought to gauge community support for a Charter School, and gave an opportunity to request an invitation for students currently in grades 6-11 to apply if the District's application is approved. 83.5% of stakeholders responding to the survey feel that the proposed hybrid model will meet the needs of the identified target population.

Do you feel that this type of hybrid model meets the needs of the targeted population identified in the survey introduction?

164 responses

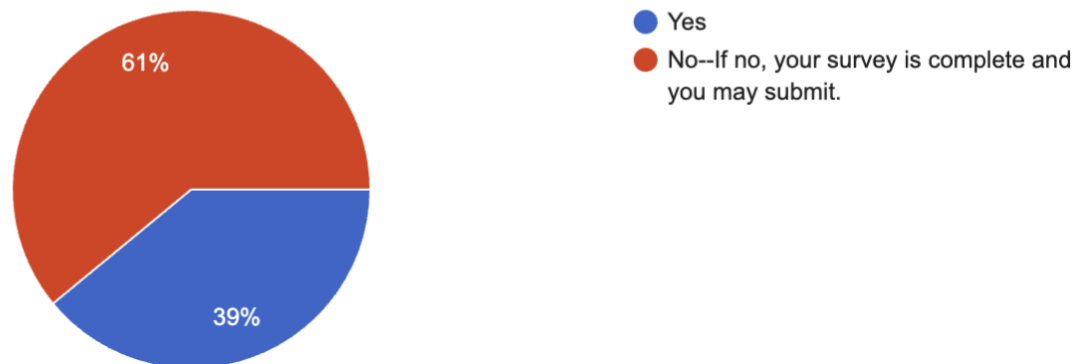


3. Describe plans and timelines for student recruitment and enrollment, including lottery procedures. Student enrollment for the 2026–27 school year will begin in the spring of 2026. At this time, enrollment will be open to students who are residents of the Miles City School District, and we do not anticipate the need for active recruitment or lottery procedures. We have already received strong interest from families and are confident that the projected enrollment will be met prior to the start of the school year in September 2026.

Our recent survey has provided us with a starting list for individualized application invitations, with nearly 40% of our 164 responses suggesting they have at least one student they'd like sent an individualized invitation.

For planning purposes, we would like to know if you'd like a personalized invitation to apply to the Charter Academy for one or more of your 7th-12th grade students. Understanding that an invitation to apply in no way obligates your child to apply or even to enroll if accepted and that the application to apply is open to all eligible students with or without a personalized invitation.

164 responses



In the event enrollment exceeds projections and/or the administration determines that increased numbers could impact instructional quality, a lottery-based enrollment process will be implemented to ensure that all in-district students have an equal opportunity to attend the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy.

Non-resident enrollment may be considered only in accordance with Title 20, Chapter 5, Part 3, Montana Code Annotated, which governs attendance agreements and enrollment of out-of-district students.

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. What makes the program innovative is its adaptability. Students and families are empowered to make choices about how, when, and where learning occurs, while still being supported by certified instructors and counselors. This model accommodates students who require flexibility due to personal or medical circumstances, those pursuing accelerated graduation, and those who benefit from alternative pacing or delivery models. By combining the accountability of an accredited curriculum with the personalization of a flexible schedule, the academy bridges the gap between homeschooling independence and traditional school structure.

Assessment of student achievement will occur on both a formative and summative basis. Weekly monitoring by online instructors will ensure that student work is consistently reviewed, graded, and aligned with course expectations, similar to practices in a traditional classroom. In addition, the Miles City School District's Strategic Plan (<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:e1d80930-a22f-4438-80f2-aede2d1d83ca>) establishes broader assessment benchmarks, including annual standardized testing and progress monitoring, to ensure that students enrolled in the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy meet or exceed state academic performance standards.

The academy's model strengthens family-school partnerships by offering meaningful parent and student choice while maintaining high academic rigor. By fostering flexibility, trust, and accountability, the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy provides a high-quality learning environment that expands educational opportunities for students across the community.

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

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will utilize a combination of traditional courses, Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) offerings, and other online platforms that are fully vetted and accredited by the State of Montana. The academy may need a variance regarding a school counselor, although we do have it in our plans to have a .25 FTE in counseling which would meet the state's requirement for one full-time counselor per 400 students. We would also need a variance to the existing librarian standard, as we do have a dedicated space for a library, but may not be able to find qualified librarian to staff in the library. However, students will have access to counselors and librarians staffed in our traditional district buildings.

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

The instructional design of the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy is centered on creating a flexible, student-focused learning environment that accommodates a range of academic needs and personal circumstances while maintaining alignment with Montana state standards.

The academy will operate as a blended and virtual learning program, combining online coursework with access to certified teachers, counselors, and academic support staff. Students may be approved to take online classes remotely, allowing them to work asynchronously at their own pace. At the same time, they will retain access to direct instructional support during the in-person operating hours of the charter school. This structure provides flexibility in time, place, and pace of learning while ensuring accountability through structured assessments and oversight by the District. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, and events to maintain a connection with the broader school community.

Class size will be determined by the nature of online and blended instruction. Student-to-teacher ratios will remain comparable to those of the District's traditional classrooms, with certified instructors responsible for monitoring progress, providing individualized support, and serving as liaisons between families and online platforms. Each student will have a personalized learning plan that outlines academic goals, pacing, and support needs. Regular communication between teachers, students, and families will ensure that students remain on track for academic success.

The academy will utilize a combination of traditional courses, Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) offerings, and other online learning platforms that are fully vetted and accredited by the State of Montana. Core subjects in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies will be delivered through MTDA or approved online platforms, with coursework and grades recorded directly by the online provider. Students will also have access to a robust catalog of online electives and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. In choosing online classes from the Montana Digital Academy, high school students will first be directed to choose from "High School Original Courses" (<https://montanadigitalacademy.org/programs/original-credit-courses/>) and middle school students will be directed to choose from "Middle School Courses" (<https://montanadigitalacademy.org/programs/middle-school-courses/>), but on a case-by-case basis, students will have the opportunity to choose from other MTDA "Core Programs" or other online platforms to fulfill their personal learning plans.

In addition, they may choose to complete elective and CTE courses in a traditional classroom setting by attending Custer County District High School or Washington Middle School, thereby maintaining a strong connection to the District's comprehensive programs. Juniors and seniors meeting CCDHS's Pathways Program may elect to incorporate Pathways into their plan of study. Pathways Program Handbook: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:29f21367-a82a-48d8-b6cb-e11b75d255a8>

The academy will also ensure that all students complete a course in Personal Finance, as required by Montana law (MCA § 20-7-135), either through online coursework or in-person options, as part of their pathway to graduation.

Instruction will be delivered primarily through accredited online platforms, with student work graded directly by MTDA or the selected provider. Certified District instructors will provide additional guidance, monitor progress, and offer targeted interventions as needed. Students working asynchronously will still have the opportunity to seek support, clarification, and direct instruction from academy staff during in-person operating hours. Teachers will also act as mentors and facilitators, ensuring that students remain engaged and supported in meeting their academic goals. Instructional strategies will include direct support, project-based learning opportunities, formative assessments, and individualized feedback. The academy will emphasize the development of self-management, digital literacy, and problem-solving skills to prepare students for postsecondary education and career pathways.

Charter Academy Hybrid Learning Options – At a Glance

Charter Academy offers three flexible pathways to meet the needs of all learners. Regardless of the option chosen, **all assessments are completed on campus** to ensure fairness and consistency.

Option	Where Learning Happens	Flexibility	In-Person Opportunities	Assessments
Option 1: Fully In-Person	On campus daily	Low – fixed schedule	Daily classes, extracurriculars	All on site
Option 2: Blended Hybrid	Core online, electives/CTE in person	Moderate – flexible pacing	Labs, projects, electives, CTE, support	All on site
Option 3: Fully Remote	100% online	High – self-paced	Virtual check-ins (optional)	All on site

■ Choose the pathway that best fits your child's learning style and family needs. Charter Academy ensures consistent, high-quality instruction across all models.

Use the following link for a more detailed profile of the three learner types:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:d0bc911a-0998-4f4b-8356-69c10c2f66c5>

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 Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will adhere to all existing Miles City School District policies and procedures, as well as all applicable federal and Montana state laws, regarding student identification and access to services. Specifically, the District and, by extension, the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy are required to identify, locate, and evaluate all children residing within the District who may have a disability, require special education, or may benefit from participation in other federally funded programs offered by the District.

To ensure these responsibilities are met, the Director of Special Services will continue to coordinate all Child Find activities, which occur on an ongoing basis throughout the District. The determination of need and the evaluation for services may be initiated either by a parent/guardian or by the school.

In support of this commitment, the District plans to relocate its Special Services department into the same facility that will house the in-person Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy classrooms. This intentional co-location will strengthen collaboration, streamline communication, and allow staff to bridge services as needed and appropriate, ensuring students receive timely and effective support.

8. Describe student discipline policies, including those for special education students. Students enrolled in the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy are expected to follow all discipline policies, procedures, and protocols established by Miles City Public Schools. These policies apply to all students, including those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). In addition to District policy, students receiving special education services are entitled to the rights and protections guaranteed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The District is committed to maintaining a supportive, inclusive environment where every student has access to the opportunities and protections they deserve.

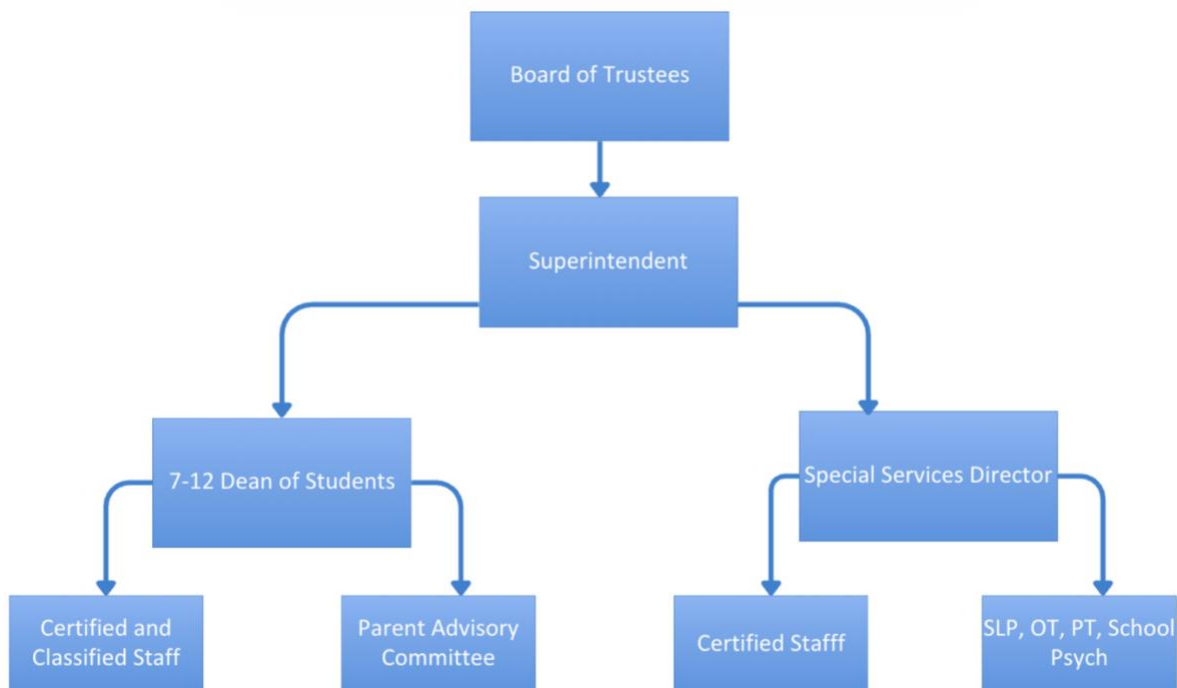
9. Describe how the public charter school will demonstrate a commitment to and robust understanding of personalized and proficiency-based learning.

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy exemplifies the District's vision of *C.L.A.S.S.* by providing personalized and proficiency-based learning that both challenges students and supports their success. Individualized learning plans allow students to progress at their own pace while meeting Montana state standards. Coursework is delivered through accredited online platforms such as MTDA, with mastery tracked directly, and students receive ongoing support from certified instructors during in-person operating hours. Flexible options for electives and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses—online or in-person at District schools—enable students to pursue their interests, recover credits, or accelerate toward early graduation. This approach ensures all students are supported in achieving academic success while fostering self-direction, engagement, and readiness for postsecondary opportunities.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

See Submission Procedures

10. 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.



The Parent Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the District's Strategic Planning Committee, will meet annually to review and discuss the results of the comprehensive needs assessment. Both the Parent and Community Advisory Committee and the School Leadership Committee will meet as needed to provide ongoing

feedback and guidance to the building administration. These committees will also actively participate in the annual comprehensive needs assessment, which will inform goal setting and strategic planning for the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy. Additionally, the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will present a building report each year during a regular District school board meeting, consistent with the reporting practices of all District schools.

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

The Miles City School District, located in Southeastern Montana’s Custer County, operates five school buildings, a Special Services building, and a Central Administrative Office. In the 2025–26 school year, Custer County District High School serves approximately 500 students in grades 9–12, including an embedded Alternative School with 6 of 10 seats filled. Washington Middle School enrolls roughly 305 students in grades 6–8. Elementary schools include Highland Park Early Learning Center, which houses four kindergarten sections and two targeted early learning sections, as well as Lincoln and Garfield Elementary Schools serving grades 1–5, with a combined enrollment of about 500 students.

The District is led by a full-time superintendent, with a full-time Special Services Director reporting to the superintendent. Each elementary school has a full-time principal, and the middle and high schools each have a head and assistant principal, with both schools sharing a full-time Activities Director. The District is governed by an 11-member school board.

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will operate under the governance of the Miles City Unified School Board, which will set overall strategic direction and policies. Day-to-day operations will be managed by the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy administration, with direct support from the Special Services Director, as the District plans to relocate its full Special Services department into the same building as the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy.

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

Staff	FTE Year 1	FTE Year 2	FTE Year 3	FTE Year 4	FTE Year 5
Dean of Student	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Middle School Teachers *	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
High School Teachers *	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Counselor *	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
SPED Teachers	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Paraprofessional	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Secretary *	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Custodial Staff *	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5

*Indicates shared FTE of an already existing employee

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

Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy Startup Timeline (2026–27 School Year)

Month	Key Activities	Category
Jan 2026	Receive official charter approval; Admin team reviews timelines; Notify School Board; Post positions.	✓ Administration / Staffing
Feb 2026	Draft Student Handbook, applications, selection rubrics; Form Teacher Advisory Council; Begin curriculum and instructional material selection; assign School Administrator.	📖 Curriculum / Instruction
Mar 2026	Begin budget development; Advertise student applications; Open admissions window; School Administrator begins assigning/hiring instructional staff; Facilities planning; Finalize instructional materials; Report to School Board.	💰 Budget / Facilities / Staffing
Apr 2026	Finalize instructional staffing; Plan student selection process; Report to School Board; Conduct student selection late April/early May.	✓ Staffing / Students
May 2026	Notify students/families of selection; Review of Student Handbook by School Board; Report to School Board; Assign/Hire Administrative Assistant.	🏠 Students / Administration
Summer 2026	Prepare building for Charter Academy; Report to School Board; Assign/Hire paraprofessional staff; Staff professional development.	🏢 Facilities / Staffing / PD
Aug 2026	Staff professional development and planning; Report to School Board; Opening Day!	📖 PD / Administration / Students

Color-Coding Legend: - ✓ Administration / Staffing

- 📖 Curriculum / Instruction / PD

- 💰 Budget / Facilities

- 🏢 Facilities / Staffing

- 🏠 Students

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

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will follow District hiring practices. Recruitment will begin by reviewing interest among District staff for instructional and administrative (dean of students) roles, with interested staff participating in start-up planning and professional development on personalized learning, proficiency-based education, gifted and talented instruction, and alternative schooling. If needed, positions may be advertised externally. All staff will receive focused, role-specific training for the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy.

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

We will follow all current employment policies utilized in Miles City Public Schools. Evaluations will follow the same procedures currently being used. (<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:735045c0-61ad-4b7b-b4f4-5ca54cf7d7d0>)

16. State the proposed governing bylaws.

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will follow the policies and procedures of Miles City Public Schools, which are maintained by the Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA) through their Simbli platform and can be found at the following link: <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/PolicyListing.aspx?S=36031286>

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

The Montana Digital Academy (MTDA), Miles Community College (MCC), Miles City Job Service, Miles City Public Library, Custer County District High School Pathways Program, Eastern Montana Community Mental Health Center (CSCT), and Miles City Police Department/City of Miles City/County Commissioners—School Resource Officer Program are the partnerships and/or contractual relationships we anticipate being central to the successful operations and mission of the charter school.

18. Provide the proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.

The language provided in board policy 1005FE for proficiency-based education will dictate the need for student attendance and enrollment. In general, the school year will start in accordance with the start date of the other schools in the district as agreed upon by the District Calendar Committee and approved by the Miles City Public School Board. This school will also take the scheduled breaks as outlined in the district calendar. Since the 2023-2024 school year, Miles City has operated a four-day school week meeting the hours required in Montana law (MCA § 20-1-301). It is our intentions that the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy would also follow the four-day school week structure for those attending in-person. In the 2025-2026 school year, the academic calendar can be found at the following link: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:US:c55e9634-a353-4022-9aec-05d7ec684267>.

Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy — Bell Schedules

All schedules use 57-minute periods, 3-minute passing times, and a 30-minute lunch from 11:45 AM–12:15 PM.

Time	Schedule 1 (7:45 – 1:15)	Schedule 2 (9:45 – 3:15)	Schedule 3 (7:45 – 3:15, 7 periods)
7:45 – 8:42	Period 1	—	Period 1
8:42 – 8:45	Passing	—	Passing
8:45 – 9:42	Period 2	—	Period 2
9:42 – 9:45	Passing	—	Passing
9:45 – 10:42	Period 3	Period 1	Period 3
10:42 – 10:45	Passing	Passing	Passing
10:45 – 11:42	Period 4	Period 2	Period 4
11:42 – 11:45	Passing	Passing	Passing
11:45 – 12:15	Lunch (30)	Lunch (30)	Lunch (30)
12:15 – 1:12	Period 5	Period 3	Period 5
1:12 – 1:15	Passing / Buffer	Passing	Passing
1:15 – 2:12	—	Period 4	Period 6
2:12 – 2:15	—	Passing	Passing
2:15 – 3:12	—	Period 5	Period 7
3:12 – 3:15	—	Passing / Buffer	Passing / Buffer
3:15 PM	Release	Release	Release

Dedicated Math Period

Dedicated English/ELA Period

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

See Submission Procedures

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

Students enrolled in the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will have access to the District's food services on the same basis as all other students. Parents and guardians will be responsible for transporting their students to and from the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy for in-person learning, as well as to and from most field trips and experiential learning activities. Parents are also responsible for providing transportation for students who choose to participate in elective and CTE courses at Custer County District High School or Washington Middle School, including the High School Pathways program for juniors and seniors. In addition, parents must provide transportation to and from extracurricular practices and to bus loading sites for away competitions.

20. Describe cocurricular and extracurricular programs and how the programs will be funded and delivered.

Through our current adopted policies and state law, we will offer all students who qualify the opportunity to participate in cocurricular and extracurricular programming. Extracurricular participation will follow MHSA guidelines and students will compete for Custer County District High School. Middle school students will have the opportunity to join sports teams and activities at Washington Middle School.

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

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will follow the District's established financial plan and procedures, with monthly updates provided to the School Board. All funding, expenditures, and accounting controls will be included in the District's annual financial and compliance audit, conducted by Wipfli, and reported to the Board and the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

22. Describe the insurance coverage that will be obtained.

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will be covered by the same insurance provider as Miles City Public Schools. Current coverage is provided through Montana Schools Property and Liability Insurance Plan administered by Marsh McLennan Agency.

23. Describe the startup and five-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions.

As reflected in the 5-year projections, the minimum student enrollment in the online charter school will provide sufficient budget to support initial operations. The 5-year projections are based upon a sustained enrollment of 62, despite our expectation that enrollment will grow by year 5. Because the changes from the last legislative session have not been codified and therefore, no law book has been made available, these five-year projections are relying on Basic Entitlement Allocations included in HB 549 Fiscal Note from 2023 <https://docs.legmt.gov/download-ticket?ticketId=6e3b9910-dba6-48bc-a6e7-62622f2f03b6>. This only states the Basic Entitlement Allocations through 2027, so that number has been reproduced in each of our five-year projections. During the first year of the online charter school, we estimate state and local funding totaling just under \$500k with operational expenses of less than \$631k. Upon first look, this creates deficit spending in year one. This is because ANB for the 2026-2027 school year was already allocated to the traditional schools (CCDHS and WMS) the year before. While ANB won't be allocated directly to the charter in year one, we will be able to offset this deficit spending by using General Fund dollars from both the high school and elementary district budgets for ANB that is transferring to the charter school. In the second year and beyond, ANB will flow directly to the charter school and will be reflected in the charter school budget. Assuming modest inflationary increases of 3% to the expenditures (also not knowing what changes will occur to revenue sources considering the decennial study and upcoming Legislative Session), it is anticipated that funding would continue to support operations with a surplus at the end of each fiscal year allowing for the hiring of additional staff to support operations or for larger purchases or renovations.

Final Financial Summary						
Description	Assumption	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31
Total Revenue		\$ 496,411.00	\$ 903,942.60	\$ 903,942.60	\$ 903,942.60	\$ 903,942.60
Total Expenditures	3% Increase annually	\$ 630,478.22	\$ 649,392.57	\$ 668,874.35	\$ 688,940.58	\$ 709,608.80
Surplus (Deficit)		\$ (134,076.22)	\$ 254,550.03	\$ 235,068.25	\$ 215,002.02	\$ 194,333.80

24. Describe the startup and first year cash flow projections with clearly stated assumptions. Initially, the charter school won't house many "new" students to the District, but rather students who have already been counted in ANB in years past, but who are considered our targeted populations because of extenuating factors that may lead to drop out or transition to homeschooling, including students looking to accelerate their learning for early graduation. For these reasons, it is imperative in at least year 1 that we share teachers from the middle school and high school rather than hire additional faculty, as the creation of the charter school will impact enrollment numbers at both the middle school and high school buildings, creating a decrease to each's ANB payment in year 2 after cost sharing from the General Funds of both districts in year 1. Start up and first year cash flow projections are stated in the proposed budget sheet with clearly stated assumptions.

Miles City Unified School District Charter School Budget Assumptions and Projections							
Overall Description Details							
Description	Assumptions	Amount	Number	Total			
General	Assume a \$496,411 in year 1 and a \$903,943 in year 2+ once ANB is collected (Figures have been rounded for simplicity)						
Number of Students	A total of at least 21 7-8th grade students and a minimum of 41 9-12th grade students are needed to receive a Basic Entitlement for the Middle School and High School. The charter school can accommodate up to 80 students fully in-person and has capped enrollment, include fully remote within the range of 100-150.		62	62		62	
High School	Minimum enrollment of 41 students		41	41		41	
Middle School	Minimum enrollment of 21 students		21	21		21	
Elementary School	Not expected		0	0		0	
Facility Square Footage	The former Jefferson Elementary School will be utilized for the charter school. Special Services will also relocate to this building. Cost sharing will occur between the Charter and Special Services for use of this space.	N/A		0		0	
Student Teacher Ratio	Class sizes will adhere to accreditation rules of Montana.						
Average Teacher Salary	Average teacher salary in the Miles City Public School District is approximately \$53,869.						
		2026-2027			2027-2028		
Revenues							
Description	Assumptions	Amount	Number	Total	Amount	Number	Total
High School Basic Entitlement \$372,309	We project we will meet the minimum enrollment of 41 high school students and 21 middle school students for eligibility of the basic entitlement.						
Middle School Basic Entitlement \$124,102							
High School Basic Entitlement	\$372,309	\$ 372,309.00	1	\$ 372,309.00	\$ 372,309.00	1	\$ 372,309.00
Middle School Basic Entitlement	\$124,102	\$ 124,102.00	1	\$ 124,102.00	\$ 124,102.00	1	\$ 124,102.00
State ANB formula for High School \$8,497	per high school ANB (-2/7 payment to high school for concurrent enrolment)	\$ -	41	\$ -	\$ 6,069.30	41	\$ 248,841.30
State ANB formula for Middle School \$8,497	per middle school ANB (-2/7 payment to middle school for concurrent enrolment)	\$ -	21	\$ -	\$ 6,069.30	21	\$ 127,455.30
Quality Educator Payment \$3,865x2	per certified staff (assuming STARS Act provisions are met)	\$ -	3.75	\$ -	\$ 7,730.00	3.75	\$ 28,987.50
Data for Achievement \$24.82	per ANB (-2/7 payment for concurrent enrolment)	\$ -	62	\$ -	\$ 17.75	62	\$ 1,100.50
Indian Education for All \$25.92	per ANB (-2/7 payment for concurrent enrolment)	\$ -	62	\$ -	\$ 18.50	62	\$ 1,147.00
American Indian Achievement Gap \$249	per Native American student, which we don't know at this time	\$ 242.00	0	\$ -	\$ 249.00	0	\$ -
Applicable State Grants	equitable share of appropriate grants	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ -
Applicable Federal Grants	equitable share of appropriate grants	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ -
TOTAL REVENUES				\$ 496,411.00			\$ 903,942.60

Expenditures				
Description	Assumptions	Amount	Number	Total
Personnel				
Administrator/Dean of Students	prorated per student enrollment	\$ 65,000.00	1	\$ 65,000.00
Counselor	prorated per student enrollment	\$ 53,869.00	0.25	\$ 13,467.25
Teachers	prorated per student enrollment	\$ 53,869.00	1.5	\$ 80,803.50
Paraprofessionals	average wage \$13.50; average hours/year 1,300	\$ 17,550.00	4	\$ 70,200.00
Clerical/Administrative Assistant	shared position with Special Services; wage \$20.50; average hours/year 1,600	\$ 32,800.00	0.5	\$ 16,400.00
Custodial	Special Services hires own custodian; based on annual hours of 2,080	\$ 30,326.00	0.5	\$ 15,163.00
Fringe Benefits	20% additional to employee salary	\$ 261,033.75	x20%	\$ 52,206.75
Insurance Benefits	\$15,000 per employee	\$ 15,000.00	7.75	\$ 116,250.00
	TOTAL PERSONNEL		7.75	\$ 429,490.50
Instruction				
Description	Assumption	Amount	Number	Total
Online Curriculum	\$150 per student per course per semester; 10 courses per student	\$ 1,500.00	62	\$ 93,000.00
Classroom Supplies	\$10 per student	\$ 10.00	62	\$ 620.00
Computer/Tech Supplies	\$600 per student	\$ 600.00	62	\$ 37,200.00
Instructional Equipment	Staff computers (Dean of Students, Certified Staff Laptops)	\$ 600.00	4	\$ 2,400.00
Classroom Equipment	None budgeted at this time			
	TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL			\$ 133,220.00
Supplies and Services				
Description	Assumptions	Amount	Number	Total
Office Supplies	\$50.00 per FTE	\$ 50.00	7.75	\$ 387.50
Furniture	None needed	\$ -	0	\$ -
Bookkeeping, Audit, Payroll Services	Indirect costs	\$ -	0	\$ -
Banking	Indirect costs	\$ -	0	\$ -
Legal	Indirect costs	\$ -	0	\$ -
Liability and Property Insurance	Indirect costs	\$ -	0	\$ -
Staff Professional Development	None needed	\$ -	0	\$ -
Travel for Staff Site to Site	\$35/month per CBA x 9 months	\$ 315.00	4	\$ 1,260.00
Internet	Indirect costs	\$ -	0	\$ -
Food Services	Indirect costs	\$ -	0	\$ -
Transportation	Indirect costs	\$ -	0	\$ -
Health Supplies	Indirect costs	\$ -	0	\$ -
	TOTAL SUPPLIES AND SERVICES			\$ 1,647.50
Facilities				
Description	Assumptions	Amount	Number	Total
Jefferson Heat		\$ 7,000.00	0.7	\$ 4,900.00
Jefferson Electricity		\$ 5,000.00	0.7	\$ 3,500.00
Jefferson Water and Sewer		\$ 4,000.00	0.7	\$ 2,800.00
Jefferson Disposal Services		\$ 2,500.00	0.7	\$ 1,750.00
Jefferson Repair and Maintenance		\$ 2,000.00	0.7	\$ 1,400.00
Jefferson Building Supplies and Minor Equipment		\$ 2,000.00	0.7	\$ 1,400.00
Jefferson Telephone	Cost share with Special Services (70/30)	\$ 600.00	0.7	\$ 420.00
Indirect Costs	Calculated at 5% of Revenue	\$ 859,004.48	0.05	\$ 42,950.22
	TOTAL FACILITIES			\$ 66,120.22

				2026-2027	2027-2028
Final Financial Summary					
Description	Assumption	Amount	Number	Total	Total
Total Revenue				\$ 496,411.00	\$ 903,942.60
Total Expenditures				\$ 630,478.22	\$ 630,478.22
Surplus (Deficit)				\$ (134,076.22)	\$ 273,464.38

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

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy budget will cover operational costs not shared with other District schools, and any donations directed to the Academy will be managed according to Board policies. If additional funds are needed, grant opportunities will be pursued, and the potential creation of an endowment fund may be considered.

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

The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will be located in the former Jefferson Elementary Building, which was vacated at the end of the 2025 school year. Because the building is fully handicap accessible, the District's Special Services department will also move into this location, sharing space and some staff positions with the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy. The Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will utilize four classrooms, a student meeting room, and restroom facilities. In the future, the former teachers' lounge may be utilized for life skills training or independent living courses once the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy is more established. The school will provide all required technology exclusively for students enrolled in and attending classes at the brick-and-mortar site to ensure full access and participation in the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy online learning platform. On-site staff will offer support to help students navigate and utilize the technology effectively.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEED

See Submission Procedures

27. Describe the specific evidence of significant community support.

Local businesses and organizations in our community consistently seek employees who have completed their high school education. They deeply value the significance of earning a diploma—not only as a credential, but as a testament to perseverance and determination. Employers especially respect individuals who have faced and overcome academic or personal challenges yet remained committed to achieving this important milestone.

Our Charter School Academy was created to meet a clear community need by offering a nontraditional path to a high school diploma. In recent years, our ANB counts have shown a notable decline between the October and February count days, underscoring the number of students who disengage before completion. The goal of the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy is to provide those students, who are on the threshold of dropping out, with an alternative route to graduation—one that reflects both their resilience and the community's strong belief in the value of a high school diploma.

Stakeholders throughout the community have expressed strong support for establishing the brick-and-mortar component of the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy in the vacated Jefferson Elementary School building, which was closed following the consolidation of our elementary district at the end of the 2024–25 school year. They recognize that repurposing this beloved facility not only preserves an important piece of community history but also represents an innovative and meaningful way to address student dropout rates while keeping the building vibrant and fully operational.

A secondary goal of the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy is to reengage students who have previously left the traditional school system and to bridge the gap between public education and homeschooled families. By

creating flexible pathways that honor diverse learning needs and circumstances, the Academy aims to reconnect learners with the resources, support, and sense of belonging that lead to long-term academic and personal success.

Additionally, in a recent survey conducted in late September 2025, stakeholders of the Miles City Public School District were asked to complete a 10-minute survey, which provided more information about the application for a Public Charter School in Miles City, identified the targeted population, sought to gauge community support for a Charter School, and gave an opportunity to request an invitation for students currently in grades 6-11 to apply if the District's application is approved. An overwhelming 84% of stakeholders who responded believe there is a need for this type of school, even if their own child does not fit the targeted population.

28. Describe the opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.

Parents of students attending the Custer County C.L.A.S.S. Academy will be connected with all school functions in the same manner as parents of students in our already existing schools. They will have access to extracurricular and cocurricular activities, access to facilities and District resources, invitations to family focused activities including family engagement nights and parent/teacher conferences. The parents will be involved in the application process, crafting of their student's personalized schedule and student profile, and will have an opportunity to serve on the established parent advisory committee. Through the accreditation process and the Comprehensive Needs Assessment which surveys all stakeholder groups, parents will have an opportunity to provide regular feedback which influences the goals of the District, as outlined in the District's Strategic Plan.

Questions? Contact bpe@mt.gov