

# PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION COVER PAGE

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

Name of Public Charter School Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School – “STEPS”

Local school district in which the public charter school will be physically located: Stevensville School District in Stevensville, MT

## Contact Information for the Governing Board Chair

Contact Person: Ben Meyer School Board Chairman  
Name  Title

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Telephone Number: 406-777-5481

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## Contact Information for the Person Completing this Application

Contact Person: Jon Konen Superintendent  
Name  Title

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## 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. ([Board Minutes Link](#))

# PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION

Name of Public Charter School: Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School – “STEPS”

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 Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School or “STEPS” is a Student focused, Teacher guided Educational path Preparing the way for Success and provides flexible, personalized, and innovative learning opportunities for students. Its mission is to prepare students for success in college, careers, and life by offering in person, online, and remote pathways that honor individual learning styles, life circumstances, and academic goals. Through partnerships with Stevensville School District staff, trusted virtual providers, local colleges, and career programs, students will access high-quality instruction that is both rigorous and connected to the community.*

*The public charter designation allows the school to offer a level of flexibility and personalization not possible in traditional district programs. Autonomy in curriculum, scheduling, and delivery enables instruction to adapt to students’ unique needs, including health challenges, family responsibilities and preferences, or work obligations. This locally-supported alternative ensures all students can stay engaged, achieve academically, and graduate prepared for college, career, or other post-secondary pathways.*

Opening Date: 08-25-26 Public Charter Term Length: 5 Years

Grades to be served: 9-12

Minimum Enrollment Per Year: 40

Planned Enrollment Per Year: 60

Maximum Enrollment Per Year: 80

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									5	10	15	30	60
Year 2									6	10	18	31	65
Year 3									7	11	20	32	70
Year 4									8	13	22	32	75
Year 5									10	15	25	30	80

# 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.

**Mission:** We empower high school students—on campus or in homeschool settings—to pursue personalized learning pathways that match their goals, interests, and pace. Through academic excellence and partnerships with local colleges and career programs, we prepare students to meet Montana's growing need for skilled professionals.

**Vision:** We envision a future where every student, regardless of their personal or academic challenges, has access to a high-quality, student-centered education that empowers them to learn anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace. Our charter school will serve as a model of how alternative and online learning can re-engage students, personalize instruction, and expand opportunities beyond the traditional classroom.

### Why this initiative is important to the community:

Many students thrive in non-traditional learning environments due to a variety of factors, including health needs, family responsibilities and preferences, work obligations, or learning differences.

Currently, these students often lack consistent access to a robust, locally-supported alternative to the traditional classroom. This charter school fills that gap by offering a flexible, on-site or remote learning model that is both academically rigorous and deeply connected to the community. It ensures that all students, regardless of circumstance, can access the education they deserve and graduate ready for college, career, or other post-secondary goals.

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will serve students in grades 9-12 throughout the school district who require or desire an alternative to the traditional classroom. Our targeted student population includes:

- Students who thrive in a remote or independent learning environment.
- Students who need a smaller, more personalized, in-person learning experience.
- Students experiencing challenges in traditional school classrooms due to health concerns, mental health needs, social anxiety, or other personal circumstances.
- Students who are behind in credits or at risk of dropping out and need a personalized pathway to graduation.
- Students with work, family, or other life challenges or responsibilities that make traditional school hours difficult.
- Advanced and gifted learners who seek flexible pacing, online dual-credit options.
- Homeschooled students who want to access accredited online coursework with teacher support and a path to graduation, as well as on campus learning opportunities.

The charter school will primarily serve families in the Stevensville School District, and those districts we may have a multi-district agreement with across Montana, as allowed by state regulations for public charter schools offering remote instruction. By offering a flexible, supportive, and academically rigorous onsite and online learning environment, the school aims to reach students who are currently underserved or under-engaged in traditional settings, providing them with a high-quality public education that fits their needs.

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

Student recruitment will begin immediately upon conditional charter approval and continue through the school's opening and beyond.

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will use a variety of strategies to inform families and students about the opportunity, including:

- [Information sessions](#) (virtual and in-person) held monthly, starting six months prior to opening
- Outreach to local school districts and counselors for referrals
- Direct mailers, flyers, and social media campaigns targeting the Bitterroot Valley and surrounding communities
- Collaboration with community organizations, youth services, and local media outlets to spread awareness
- Engagement with homeschooling families and co-ops
- Dedicated recruitment staff and enrollment support

#### **Enrollment Timeline:**

- **January–March:** Information sessions, advertising, and outreach begin
- **April–May:** Open enrollment period
- **June:** If applications exceed capacity, lottery is conducted
- **July–August:** Enrollment finalization and student orientation
- **August/September:** School year begins

#### **Lottery Procedures: [MCA](#)**

If, during the open enrollment window, the number of eligible applicants exceeds the school's capacity, a random, public lottery will be conducted to ensure fair access for all students. *The Steps charter school lottery involves a publicized application period, defined eligibility, random selection overseen by neutral parties, legally compliant priority categories, a transparent waitlist, and thorough communication with families in order to meet the requirement set forth by the Board of Public Education, OPI, and the State of Montana:*

- The homeschool online education pathway enrollment is not limited.
- Per OPI regulations, the HiSet Program pathway is limited to no more than 8% of the average number of high school graduates in the previous 3 years. In the first year, there are no more than 6 students.
- For the on-site pathway, enrollment is limited by classroom size. A team consisting of teachers, school counselors, and administrators will evaluate applications based on graduation year and individual needs using a point-based system for eligibility.
- Equal opportunity for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, disability status, language proficiency, or academic history.

#### **Ongoing Enrollment:**

As a flexible, remote school, we anticipate offering two enrollment windows, with a “**rolling admissions**” throughout the year for students facing urgent needs (e.g., medical, safety, or significant life circumstances), provided space and instructional resources are available. This will be done in alignment with state guidelines for mid-year transfers and enrollment limits.

#### **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.**

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School offers a flexible, on-site and remote academic program designed to meet the diverse needs of non-traditional learners in grades 9–12. Students engage in standards-aligned coursework through high-quality online platforms supported by certified teachers who provide direct instruction, academic coaching, and personalized support. Instruction is self-paced with clear expectations and progress monitoring, allowing students to move forward or take additional time as needed to master content. The academic program includes:

- **Core content courses** in English, math, science, and social studies aligned to Montana state standards
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** and elective options through community and online partners

- Online can include: MTD, Montana EdReady, Harmony Online, Edmentum/Edgenuity online, Dual Credit, JMG, etc...
- Community can include: Work Based Learning with local businesses, Summit Career Center coursework, Internships
- **Credit recovery and competency-based pathways** for at-risk or off-track students
- **Dual-enrollment/credit and early college opportunities** through partnerships with Montana higher education institutions. Students may utilize dual enrollment coursework to meet high school graduation requirements.
- **Academic intervention and enrichment** based on student performance and interests

This program is innovative in the Stevensville School District and broader Bitterroot Valley because it offers:

- A **fully remote, flexible learning model** for homeschool students with local teacher oversight.
- A **customizable on-site learning experience** that supports both struggling and advanced learners through pacing and personalized instruction both in person and online.
- An **integrated student support model**, small group instruction, IEP and 504 support services, and access to social-emotional resources both in person and online.
- **Data-driven progress monitoring through online platforms**, with real-time dashboards for students, families, and staff.

This approach directly addresses local gaps in alternative education and offers a scalable model for rural communities seeking flexible and responsive learning environments. Student achievement will be formally assessed on an annual basis through multiple measures:

- **State assessments** (MAST, ACT, etc.) administered according to Montana's testing calendar
- **IXL Growth** assessments given in fall, winter, and spring to monitor academic progress
- **Credit completion and course pass rates**
- **Student engagement metrics**, including log-in frequency, course progress, and participation in teacher sessions, and attendance.
- **Graduation rates and post-secondary readiness**, tracked over time.

Assessment data will be used to identify individual student needs, inform instructional decisions, and evaluate program effectiveness. Annual school-wide performance reports will be shared with stakeholders and used to guide continuous improvement.

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

To effectively implement a high-quality, student-centered remote learning program, the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School respectfully requests the following variances from existing standards and policies:

### 1. Seat Time Requirements

We request a variance from traditional seat time or daily instructional hour requirements in favor of a mastery- and competency-based model. Students will earn credit upon demonstrating proficiency through assignments, assessments, and project-based learning, regardless of the time spent in a course.

### 2. Instructional Delivery Model

We request flexibility to offer instruction through asynchronous and synchronous remote methods, including digital platforms, video conferencing, and virtual office hours. This will allow students to access learning anytime and anywhere while still receiving robust teacher support.

### 3. Staffing Structure

We may request flexibility in staffing models to allow for:

- Teachers certified in other Montana districts to serve students virtually.
- Content experts and part-time instructors, to provide support in niche subject areas (CTE, fine arts, health enhancement, etc.), under supervision of a licensed lead teacher.

These variances are essential to deliver an innovative, equitable, and flexible learning model for students who need alternatives to traditional school structures. All variances will be implemented in accordance with Montana law and with oversight by the governing board and school leadership team to ensure high academic standards are maintained.

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

### **3 Types of Learning Environments:** (may be hybrid per student request)

Students will have the opportunity to learn in a variety of environments:

- **On-site Learning:** Students engage in self-guided, independent learning in a classroom setting with no more than 15 students per session. A certified educator will be available for mentoring and support to ensure student success as they progress through hands-on learning modules.
  - **Montana HiSet Options Program:** Students will attend class onsite as they study and prepare to successfully pass the HiSet exams. Students attend 12 hours of class on-site per week. A minimum of 60 hours of instruction and passing the practice test is required prior to taking the final exam. Enrollment in this pathway is limited to 8% of graduating class (approximately 6 senior students).
- **Online Learning:** Students may choose to take select courses (especially electives, CTE, or dual enrollment courses not offered in person), with on-site mentoring and tech support to ensure student success. This option provides flexibility and personalization for learners.
- **Homeschool Online Learning:** Students enroll courses through the district's selected online learning platform in their own homeschool setting with mentoring provided by their parents to ensure student success. This option provides flexibility and personalization for learners as well as additional success monitoring and tech-support by school staff.

### **Class Size and Structure:**

Instruction is organized around small student cohorts assigned to teacher advisors who monitor progress, provide academic support, and build relationships. Each full-time teacher is responsible for a caseload of approximately 15 students. Students work independently through course content but also engage regularly with teachers during scheduled office hours, check-ins, and collaborative projects. The curriculum is aligned to Montana state standards and may be delivered through accredited digital content providers (e.g., Harmony, Edmentum, Edgenuity, Apex, Montana Digital Academy, Montana Ed Ready, or equivalent) or in person through Montana certified teachers. It includes:

- Core academic subjects (English, math, science, social studies)
- Electives, career exploration, and credit recovery courses
- Dual-credit and advanced coursework for eligible students
- Embedded social-emotional learning and soft skills development

All students develop an [\*\*Individual Learning Plan \(ILP\)\*\*](#) in partnership with their teacher mentor, that outlines their goals, pacing, and course selections, which is updated each term in collaboration with teachers, students, and families. Instruction is personalized to meet the needs of each learner using:

- **Differentiated pacing** based on mastery and need.
- **Frequent formative assessments** to inform instruction.
- **Individual (virtual and/or in person) conferencing and small groups** for targeted skill development.
- **Project-based learning opportunities** aligned to student interests.
- **Regular academic coaching and mentoring** to build student ownership and executive functioning skills.

Teachers act as facilitators, mentors, and content experts, ensuring that students are supported academically, socially, and emotionally whether in the virtual setting or in person.

**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 Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School is committed to providing an inclusive, equitable learning environment that meets the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), academically challenged students, and gifted learners. We will comply fully with all applicable federal and state laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Title III of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

**Students with Disabilities:**

The school will identify students with disabilities through a robust **Child Find** process, including referral, evaluation, and eligibility determination. Eligible students will receive services as outlined in their **Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)** or **Section 504 Plans**, developed in partnership with families and a multidisciplinary team.

Accommodations and specialized instruction will be integrated into the online platform and supported by **special education teachers, case managers, and related service providers**. Services may include:

- Modified curriculum and materials
- Virtual speech/language, occupational, or counseling services
- Individualized pacing and assignment flexibility
- Co-teaching and consultation with general education staff

IEP meetings will be held virtually or in person, with progress monitoring and service delivery documented in compliance with IDEA timelines and procedural safeguards.

**English Language Learners (ELLs):**

The school will identify English learners through a home language survey and English language proficiency assessment upon enrollment. Identified students will receive **English Language Development (ELD)** services aligned to Montana ELP standards and integrated into their daily learning experience. Services will include:

- Targeted ELD instruction with licensed ELL teachers or trained staff
- Linguistically appropriate scaffolding within the online curriculum
- Access to translation services and bilingual support when needed
- Annual WIDA ACCESS testing and progress monitoring

**Academically Challenged Students:**

Students who are at risk academically or credit-deficient will be identified through assessments, progress data, and teacher referrals. These students will receive:

- Personalized learning plans and pacing
- Academic coaching and check-ins
- Tutoring and small group intervention sessions
- Access to credit recovery and remediation options

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) will be implemented to address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs through evidence-based interventions and progress tracking.

**Advanced Learners:**

Students demonstrating that they are ready for advanced coursework may be offered enrichment opportunities such as:

- Accelerated pacing through online coursework
- Advanced Placement or honors-level content
- Dual-enrollment and early college options
- Independent study and project-based learning tied to student interests

## **Equity and Access:**

All services and support will be delivered in compliance with legal requirements and adapted for the alternative environment using a combination of live instruction, recorded lessons, online platforms, interactive tools, and individualized support. The school will maintain accurate records, provide procedural safeguards, and ensure that all students have the technology, internet access, and accommodations necessary to succeed.

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

Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment for all students, whether in virtual or in-person settings. Our discipline policies are designed to support positive behavior, hold students accountable, and ensure equity, while also accommodating the unique needs of individuals and providing due process, especially for students with disabilities. Below is an overview of our proposed discipline framework, drawn from the Stevensville High School handbook with necessary adjustments for our alternative learning environments (based on the [2025–2026 Stevensville handbook](#)).

### **Discipline Philosophy & Principles**

- Emphasize restorative practices, relationship building, and student accountability over mere punishment.
- Use discipline as a tool for learning: misbehavior is addressed with reflection, repair, and restoration when possible.
- Ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency in policy enforcement.
- Honor student due process rights and comply with applicable laws (e.g., IDEA, Section 504) when disciplining special education students.
- Strive to minimize disruptions to learning—discipline should not unduly penalize students, especially in a remote context.

### **Scope & Jurisdiction**

Our discipline policy applies to student conduct in:

- Virtual class sessions (synchronous)
- Online course platforms, discussion boards, and assignments
- School-sponsored events, trips, and programs (in-person or online)
- Any time a student is acting in a manner that significantly disrupts the educational process or endangers others

### **Conduct and Violations**

We adopt many of the behavioral expectations and definitions from the Stevensville High School handbook (e.g., respect for others, academic integrity, prohibition of harassment, bullying, weapons, drugs, etc.). Examples of violations include (but are not limited to):

- Disruption of synchronous sessions (e.g., inappropriate speech, muting/unmuting, off-topic interference)
- Cyberbullying or harassment via digital platforms
- Academic dishonesty (plagiarism, cheating)
- Unauthorized recording or sharing of class sessions
- Use of inappropriate language, content, or images
- Threats, coercion, or intimidation
- Violence, weapons, or illegal behavior

Each violation will be categorized by severity (minor, moderate, severe) with corresponding response tiers.

### **Discipline Tiers and Responses**

Tier	Nature of Infraction	Intervention / Response
Tier 1 (Minor)**	Minor disruptions, lateness, non-disruptive misuse of chat tools, first-time warnings	Reminders, virtual “time-out” break, private coach/teacher conferencing, restoration/reflection assignments
Tier 2 (Moderate)**	Repeated disruptions, disrespect, misuse of technology, moderate academic dishonesty	Parent/family notification, loss of privileges (e.g., no live chat), mandatory meeting with advisor, behavior contract
Tier 3 (Severe)**	Harassment, threats, weapons, illicit content, repeated violations after Tier 2	Suspension from synchronous sessions or entire program (temporary), referral to disciplinary hearing, law enforcement involvement if required

\* Responses may escalate based on the context and severity

\*\* Each response includes documentation, communication with parents/families, and the opportunity for students to appeal or respond.

Restorative practices (peer mediation, reflective assignments, conflict resolution) will be preferred wherever feasible.

#### *Suspension, Expulsion, and Removal*

- The school may temporarily suspend a student from synchronous classes or from the program in extreme cases pending investigation.
- For repeated or egregious misconduct, a disciplinary hearing may recommend expulsion.
- All procedures will comply with Montana state law and provide notice, hearing rights, appeal rights, and procedural safeguards.

#### *Discipline for Students with Disabilities*

When disciplining students with IEPs or 504 plans, we will follow federal and state laws strictly (IDEA, Section 504). Some key accommodations include:

- Manifestation Determination Review (MDR): Before any long-term suspension or expulsion (e.g., over 10 days), we will hold an MDR meeting to determine whether the behavior was a manifestation of the student’s disability.
- If the behavior is disabled-related, we will not punish with exclusion from services and instead revise supports, adjust behavior plans, and ensure continued access to free appropriate public education (FAPE).
- For short-term suspensions (under legal thresholds), we may provide equivalent educational services (e.g., asynchronous assignments, tutoring) so the student does not lose learning.
- Discipline decisions will always be made in coordination with the special education team, and accommodations/modifications will be preserved.

#### *Due Process, Appeals, and Documentation*

- Students and families will receive written notice of disciplinary actions, including the reasons, duration, and appeal rights.
- A formal appeal process will be available to challenge decisions.
- All infractions and disciplinary actions will be documented in our student information system, including timelines, staff involved, parent contacts, and resolution steps.
- The governing board will review quarterly summaries of disciplinary trends, appeals, and outcomes for oversight and continuous improvement.

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School is built on a foundational commitment to personalized and proficiency-based learning that empowers each student to take ownership of their academic journey.

### *Personalized Learning*

Our school tailor's instruction to meet each student's academic level, interests, and learning style. Key components include:

- **Individual Learning Plans (ILP):** Every student develops an ILP in partnership with their teacher advisor and family. This plan identifies academic goals, pathway options, preferred learning modalities, and areas for enrichment or support and adjusts over time based on performance and interests.
- **Multiple Learning Environments:** With courses delivered in-person, online via Montana Digital Academy and other online learning platforms, and through engagement in workforce preparation, students can engage in learning pathways that align with their pace, interests, and future aspirations. Flexible pacing allows students to move at an accelerated pace or spend additional time mastering content throughout the grading period.
- **Choice and Voice:** Students will have meaningful choices in elective courses, project topics, dual credit opportunities, and experiential learning placements, empowering them to take ownership of their learning. Students are encouraged to set goals, reflect on progress, and take increasing responsibility for their learning. Regular check-ins and mentoring support these habits.
- **Advisory and Mentorship Structures:** Each student will be paired with a faculty advisor or mentor to support reflection, goal setting, and academic progress, ensuring strong relationships and consistent guidance.

### *Proficiency-Based Learning*

We believe students should advance when they demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills, not simply based on seat time. Our proficiency-based approach includes:

- **Clear Learning Targets:** All courses will be designed around transparent learning objectives and competencies, aligned with Montana state standards.
- **Flexible Pacing:** Students will progress through content at a pace that reflects their individual readiness. Opportunities for reassessment and revision will be built into the system.
- **Performance-Based Assessments:** In addition to traditional assessments, students will demonstrate proficiency through real-world projects, tasks, and presentations.
- **Grading for Mastery:** Student grades will reflect what they know and can do. Feedback will be timely, specific, and focused on growth.
- **Data-Driven Instruction:** Teachers will use frequent formative assessments and data dashboards to adjust instruction and provide targeted interventions or enrichment in real time.

Students will be expected to master key concepts and skills before advancing. By combining personalization with high expectations for proficiency, we will ensure that every student graduate prepared for the next step in their education or career.

### *Equity and Rigor:*

This approach ensures that all students, regardless of background or learning needs, are held to high expectations while receiving the support they need to succeed. Personalized and proficiency-based learning allows for greater equity, especially for students who have been underserved by traditional models, including students with disabilities, English learners, and at-risk youth. Personalized and proficiency-based learning are not supplemental features of our program, they are core to the school's mission and design, ensuring that every student is equipped to succeed in college, career, and life.

## **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 Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will operate under a clear and supportive organizational structure that ensures strong oversight, accountability, and communication. The structure integrates the charter school leadership team into the existing Stevensville School District hierarchy, while also providing dedicated roles to support the unique mission of the charter program.

*Organizational Structure Overview:*

- 1. Governing Board**
  - The Stevensville Public School Board serves as the charter's governing board, providing overall policy oversight, budget approval, accountability, and alignment with district priorities.
- 2. Superintendent**
  - The Superintendent reports directly to the Governing Board and is responsible for the implementation of district and charter policies, legal compliance, staffing oversight, and alignment with Montana law.
- 3. Principal**
  - The Principal of Stevensville Schools reports to the Superintendent and directly supervises the Charter School Director. The Principal ensures that the charter school aligns with district goals, policies, and educational standards.
- 4. Charter School Director**
  - The Director is a certified teacher (TOSA) who leads the day-to-day operations of the charter school and is responsible for instructional leadership, student support systems, compliance with charter goals, and coordination with digital content providers and staff. The Director reports to the Principal.
- 5. Certified Teachers**
  - On-site teachers report to the Charter School Director and provide direct academic support, tutoring, mentoring, and engagement services to students. They assist with monitoring online coursework, supporting Individual Learning Plans (ILP), and help maintain a positive learning environment.
- 6. Paraprofessionals**
  - The Paraprofessional reports to the Charter School Director and provides direct academic support, tutoring, mentoring, and engagement services to students and helps maintain a positive learning environment.

*Advisory and Community Involvement Bodies:*

**• Stakeholder Advisory Council (SAC):**

A volunteer advisory group consisting of parents, students, staff, and community members will meet annually to provide feedback, build community, and ensure all stakeholder voices are reflected in school operations.

This structure ensures clear lines of authority, communication, and accountability, while also maintaining the flexibility and responsiveness required by a personalized learning environment.

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will operate with a clearly defined structure of leadership and oversight that aligns with district governance and state law. The roles and responsibilities of each individual or body in the organizational chart are outlined below.

*Governing Board (Stevensville School Board):*

- Serves as the legally responsible public charter school authorizer and governing body
- Approves and monitors the charter school's mission, budget, and policies
- Holds the Superintendent and school leadership accountable for results and compliance
- Ensures adherence to state charter law, federal education regulations, and school board policies
- Reviews academic performance data and school improvement efforts
- Engages with the community to ensure the charter aligns with local needs

*Superintendent:*

- Oversees implementation of the charter school's operations within district goals and policies
- Supervises the Principal and provides leadership in legal compliance, personnel, and fiscal management
- Facilitates communication between the governing board and charter school leadership
- Ensures the school maintains alignment with Montana's public education requirements
- Represents the charter school during board meetings and public reporting

*Principal:*

- Directly supervises the Charter School Director and provides ongoing support and evaluation
- Ensures integration of the charter school into the broader educational mission of the Stevensville School District
- Assists with hiring, training, and performance evaluation of charter school staff
- Oversees student services, curriculum implementation, and adherence to state standards
- Acts as a liaison between the charter school, the district office, and families

*Charter School Director:*

- Leads the day-to-day operations of the charter school
- Provides instructional leadership, including implementation of personalized and proficiency-based learning models
- Supervises paraprofessional staff and coordinates virtual instruction with certified teachers and online platforms
- Develops and monitors Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for students
- Communicates regularly with families, students, and the community
- Coordinates student enrollment, orientation, and support services
- Ensures compliance with special education, ELL, and intervention policies

*Licensed Teachers*

- Work under the supervision of the Charter School Director to support student learning and engagement
- Assist with progress monitoring, assignment completion, and small-group or individual academic support

*Paraprofessionals*

- Provide basic technical assistance and help students navigate digital platforms
- Help implement accommodations for students with IEPs or 504 Plans under direction of licensed staff
- Foster relationships and serve as mentors, especially for students needing additional encouragement or structure

*Stakeholder Advisory Council:*

- Acts as a non-governing, voluntary advisory group consisting of parents, students, staff, and community members who will meet annually to provide feedback, build community, and ensure all stakeholder voices are reflected in school operations.
- Provides feedback on programming, family engagement, and school culture
- Meets annually to review school performance, gather community input, and offer recommendations
- Helps organize community events and supports communication between school and families

This clearly articulated leadership model ensures the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School operates with strong oversight, consistent communication, and a commitment to personalized, flexible education for all students.

**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.**

**Year 1 Staffing Chart (Estimated Enrollment: 55-65 students):**

Position	FTE	Roles/Notes
Charter School Director	1.0	Oversees all day-to-day operations, instruction, and student services (TOSA)
Certified Teachers (Core + Electives)	3.0	Provide instructional support, feedback, and direct engagement with students
Special Education Teacher	0.5	Delivers services for students with IEPs and supports compliance
Paraprofessionals	1.0	Support student engagement, academic help, and assist with progress monitoring
Administrative Assistant/Registrar	1.0	Completes enrollment, transfer records, out of district paperwork/approval process, coordinates with HS for graduation and senior activities, daily attendance reporting and communication with families for absences, posts credits on transcripts, state reporting for ANB, Graduation counts, drop out counts, social media, communication with families.
IT Support (Shared with district)	0.2	Provides technical support for staff and students in the onsite and online learning model
School Counselor (Shared)	0.2	Provides SEL support, course planning, and mental health services

*All staff are overseen by the Director, who reports to the Principal. The Principal and Superintendent positions are part of the existing district infrastructure. A portion of the principal's position will be funded by the charter.*

**Staffing Plan Over the Charter Term (Years 1–5):**

Staffing will grow in alignment with projected enrollment increases. This is a phased plan:

Year	Estimated Enrollment	Teacher FTEs	Paraprofessionals	SPED FTE	Notes
Year 1	55–65 students	4.0	1.0	0.5	Small staff, shared services
Year 2	60-70 students	4.0	1.0	0.75	Add more SPED support
Year 3	65-75 students	5.0	2.0	1.0	Add paraprofessional and possible elective teacher
Year 4	70-80 students	5.0	2.0	1.5	Expand services and course offerings
Year 5	75-85 students	6.0	3.0	2.0	Add teacher, SPED support, paraprofessional

Includes: administrative assistant and director. Additional staff such as a dedicated counselor, electives/CTE instructor, or bilingual/ELL specialist may be added depending on student need and available funding.

This staffing model balances fiscal responsibility with the personalized, high-support approach necessary in an on-site and remote alternative learning setting. It allows for scalability as the charter school grows while maintaining quality instruction, compliance, and student support services.

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will follow a structured, phased startup plan to ensure a successful and on-time launch. The following chart outlines the key tasks, projected timelines, and responsible individuals.

**Phase 1: Planning & Approval (Fall 2025 – Winter 2026)**

Task	Timeline	Responsible Party
Charter application development & submission	Fall 2025	Superintendent, Principal
Public hearings and board approval process	Fall–Winter 2025	Superintendent, District Board
Initial budget and facilities planning	Winter 2026	Business Manager, Principal
Develop enrollment and outreach plan	Winter 2026	Principal, District Office
Finalize curriculum platform selection	Winter 2026	Principal, Director (once hired)

**Phase 2: Hiring & Infrastructure Setup (Spring 2026)**

Task	Timeline	Responsible Party
Hire Charter School Director	March 2026	Principal, Superintendent
Hire teachers, paraprofessionals, administrative assistant	April–May 2026	Charter Director, HR Office
Establish student information system (SIS)	April 2026	Tech Coordinator, Director
Purchase and configure devices and software	April–May 2026	IT Staff, Director
Finalize academic calendar and daily schedule	April 2026	Director, Principal
Begin student recruitment and open enrollment	April–May 2026	Director, Communications Lead

**Phase 3: Training & Family Engagement (Summer 2026)**

Task	Timeline	Responsible Party
Staff orientation and professional development	June–July 2026	Director, Principal
Develop and distribute student handbooks	July 2026	Director, Principal
Conduct technology orientation for families	July 2026	Director, Teachers
Finalize Individual Pathways Plans (ILP <sup>2</sup> )	July–August 2026	Teachers, Director
Conduct virtual and in person student orientation sessions	August 2026	Director, Teachers

**Phase 4: Launch & Monitoring (Fall 2026 and Ongoing)**

Task	Timeline	Responsible Party
First day of instruction	August 2026	Director, Teachers
Ongoing tech and academic support	Ongoing	Director, Teachers
Progress monitoring and intervention setup	September 2026	Director, Teachers, SPED staff
Monthly progress reports to Principal/ Superintendent	Ongoing	Director
Quarterly review with Governing Board	Ongoing	Superintendent, Director

This startup plan ensures that all operational, instructional, and compliance-related components are in place well before the school's opening. Regular check-ins with the governing board and leadership team will ensure progress stays on track and aligns with all regulatory requirements.

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School is committed to recruiting highly qualified educators and staff who are skilled in alternative, online, and personalized learning. Our strategy includes both proactive recruitment and ongoing professional development to ensure instructional excellence and student success.

### ***Recruitment Plan:***

- **Job Postings and Outreach:** Open positions will be advertised on the Montana Office of Public Instruction website, district website, educational job boards, and professional networks for online and alternative learning educators.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with local universities, teacher preparation programs, and online learning networks to identify candidates with experience in remote instruction, proficiency-based learning, and digital curriculum management.
- **Selection Criteria:** Candidates will be evaluated based on Montana teacher certification (or eligibility), experience with alternative or virtual learning environments, demonstrated ability to personalize instruction, build rapport with students, and a commitment to equity and student engagement.
- **Interview Process:** Candidates will participate in an interview, including scenario-based questions and technology proficiency assessment.

### ***Staff Development Plan:***

- **Orientation and Onboarding:** All staff will participate in a comprehensive onboarding program covering curriculum platforms, online teaching best practices, student engagement strategies, and school policies.
- **Professional Learning:** Ongoing professional development will focus on areas including personalized learning, mastery-based assessment, social-emotional learning, and effective online instruction.
- **Mentoring and Coaching:** Teachers and paraprofessionals will have access to mentoring and instructional coaching from the Charter School Director and Principal.
- **Performance Feedback:** Staff will receive regular feedback through observations and performance evaluations, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

### ***Retention Strategies:***

- **Supportive Work Environment:** Staff will have clear roles, collaborative planning time, and access to leadership for guidance and problem-solving.
- **Opportunities for Growth:** Staff may participate in professional networks, earn additional certifications, and lead school initiatives.
- **Recognition and Engagement:** Regular recognition of accomplishments and contributions will be integrated into staff culture to maintain motivation and satisfaction.

This comprehensive approach ensures that the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School attracts and retains a highly qualified team capable of delivering a flexible, personalized, and high-quality online education for all students.

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

### ***Hiring and Employment Policies:***

- All leadership and teaching staff will be hired based on certification requirements, experience in alternative or online learning, and alignment with the school's mission and values.
- Employment contracts will clearly define roles, responsibilities, compensation, benefits, and terms of service.

- The charter school will adhere to Montana state law regarding teacher certification, employment, and public-school personnel policies, while allowing flexibility in staffing structures to support remote instruction.
- Staff may include full-time, part-time, or temporary assignments as needed to maintain program quality and flexibility.

### **Performance Evaluation Plans:**

#### **1. Charter School Director:**

- Evaluated annually by the Principal using a combination of:
  - Achievement of school-wide goals (academic outcomes, student engagement, retention)
  - Leadership and operational effectiveness
  - Staff and family feedback
  - Compliance with charter goals and Montana regulations

#### **2. Teachers:**

- Evaluated annually by the Charter School Director (or Principal) using a multi-measure framework, Charlotte Danielson Model, including:
  - Classroom and online instructional practices
  - Engagement and support of Individual Learning Plans (ILP)
  - Professional development participation
- Observations may be conducted virtually or in-person as applicable.

#### **3. Paraprofessionals and Support Staff:**

- Evaluated based on support effectiveness, student engagement, and contribution to learning outcomes.
- Evaluations conducted by the Charter School Director with documented feedback and goal-setting sessions.

### **Performance Improvement and Professional Growth:**

- Staff not meeting performance expectations will receive clear, documented improvement plans with timelines and support resources.
- Professional development will be aligned to identified growth areas.
- High-performing staff will be recognized and may be considered for expanded roles, leadership opportunities, or mentorship responsibilities.

### **Alignment with District Policies:**

- Employment policies, evaluation procedures, and disciplinary processes will align with Stevensville School District guidelines where applicable, ensuring legal compliance and consistency.
- The charter retains flexibility to adjust evaluation tools and metrics to reflect the unique demands of remote, personalized, and proficiency-based learning.

This framework ensures that the charter school maintains a high-quality, accountable staff, supports professional growth, and aligns with both district and state requirements.

## **16. State the proposed governing bylaws.**

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will operate under the following proposed governing bylaws, aligned with Montana law and Stevensville School District policies:

### **1. Authority and Purpose**

- The charter school operates as a public school under the governance of the Stevensville School Board, with the mission to provide flexible, personalized, and online learning for students grades K–12.
- The board's authority includes oversight of policy, budget, curriculum approval, and compliance with state and federal law.

### **2. Board Composition**

- The Governing Board consists of 8 members of the Stevensville School Board.

- Additional advisory members may participate (e.g., parents, community members) but will not have voting authority unless permitted by board policy.

### **3. *Board Meetings***

- Meetings will comply with Montana Open Meeting Laws.
- The board will meet at least quarterly to review charter school performance, budgets, and compliance.
- Notice of meetings will be publicly posted, and agendas will be available to the community in advance.

### **4. *Officers***

- The board shall elect or appoint officers as required by district policy (e.g., Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary).
- Officers are responsible for overseeing meetings, maintaining records, and ensuring board governance aligns with state and district requirements.

### **5. *Committees and Advisory Groups***

- The board may establish committees or advisory groups, such as the Stakeholder Advisory Council, to provide input on curriculum, student engagement, and community concerns.
- Advisory groups serve in a consultative capacity without voting authority.

### **6. *Decision-Making***

- The board makes policy and budgetary decisions by **majority vote** of members present at a duly noticed meeting.
- The Superintendent, Principal, and Charter School Director provide recommendations and operational reports but do not vote.

### **7. *Accountability and Oversight***

- The board monitors student achievement, financial management, and compliance with charter goals.
- The charter school Director reports regularly to the Principal and Superintendent, who in turn report to the board.
- Annual performance reviews, audits, and progress reports will be submitted to the board for oversight.

### **8. *Conflict of Interest***

- Board members must disclose conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from votes where a personal or financial conflict exists, in accordance with district and state law.

### **9. *Amendments***

- Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the Governing Board, provided the amendment is consistent with Montana charter school law and Stevensville School District policy.

These bylaws provide a transparent, accountable, and legally compliant governance framework, ensuring the charter school operates effectively while maintaining oversight by the Stevensville School Board.

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will rely on strategic partnerships and contractual relationships to provide high-quality, flexible, and personalized learning experiences for students. Key partnerships include:

### **1. *Digital Curriculum Providers***

- The school will contract with accredited online curriculum providers, such as Harmony, Montana Digital Academy, Montana EdReady, Edgenuity, Edmentum, and IXL to deliver standards-aligned courses in core subjects, electives, and credit recovery.
- These providers offer digital content, assessments, and learning management systems that support proficiency-based instruction and individualized pacing.

**2. Online Instructional Support**

- Partnerships may include virtual tutoring or supplemental teaching services, ensuring students have access to certified teachers for individualized support.
- Online instructional partners may provide additional coursework for advanced students, dual-credit courses, or career/CTE pathways.

**3. Special Education and Related Services**

- The school will partner with district special education coordinators, therapists, and external providers as needed to deliver IEP and 504 Plan services for students with disabilities.
- Services may include virtual speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, counseling, or specialized instruction delivered in compliance with Montana and federal law.

**4. Community and Industry Partnerships**

- The charter may establish relationships with local businesses, organizations, or postsecondary institutions to provide career exploration, internships, and real-world learning experiences aligned with student interests and workforce needs.
- These partnerships enhance the mission of personalized learning by offering applied learning opportunities beyond the virtual classroom.

**5. Contractual Oversight**

- All partnerships will be governed by formal contracts or memoranda of understanding that clearly define roles, responsibilities, deliverables, reporting requirements, and compliance with state education standards.
- The Charter School Director, in consultation with the Principal and Superintendent, will oversee all contracts and partnerships to ensure alignment with the school's mission, student needs, and regulatory requirements.

These partnerships are central to the charter school's ability to provide a flexible, rigorous, and personalized educational experience while maintaining high standards of academic achievement, equity, and student support.

**18. Provide the proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.**

*Proposed Academic Calendar (2026–2027 School Year)*

- **Start Date:** August 24, 2026
- **End Date:** May 26, 2027
- **Holidays/Breaks:**
  - Labor Day: September 7, 2026
  - Thanksgiving Break: November 25–27, 2026
  - Winter Break: December 21, 2026 – January 1, 2027
  - Spring Break: March 29 – April 2, 2027
  - Memorial Day: May 31, 2027
- **Professional Development Days:**
  - August 17–21, 2026 (Staff Orientation)
  - Weekly PLC Wednesdays
  - Monthly PD Wednesdays (half-day for teachers, asynchronous assignments for students)
- **Instructional Days:** 180 days (meets Montana minimum instructional hour requirements, with flexibility for online mastery-based pacing)

*Sample Daily Schedule Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday (In Person Model)*

Time	Activity
8:30 - 8:40 AM	AM Session Check-In / Advisory
8:40–10:00 AM	AM Session Instruction and Independent Learning
10:00–10:15 AM	AM Session Break
10:15–10:30 AM	AM Session Small Group Instruction (SEL)

10:30-11:30 AM	AM Session Instruction and Independent Learning
11:30-12:00 PM	Teacher Office Hours / Tutoring
8:30 - 11:30 AM	AM Session Remote Independent Learning
12:00-12:10 PM	PM Session Check-In / Advisory
12:10-1:30 PM	PM Session Instruction and Independent Learning
1:30-1:45 PM	PM Session Break
1:45-2:00 PM	PM Session Small Group Instruction (SEL)
2:00-3:00 PM	PM Session Instruction and Independent Learning
3:30-3:50 PM	Teacher Office Hours / Tutoring
12 PM - 3:00 PM	PM Session Remote Independent Learning

**Notes:**

- On Wednesday's teachers and staff use this time to prepare lessons, grade work, communicate with students and families, and provide additional interventions, and PLC meetings. Students may be engaged in remote independent learning and/or work-based learning experiences or receive one to one tutoring.
- Students may access asynchronous lessons outside of this schedule, allowing flexible pacing and mastery-based learning.
- Teachers and paraprofessionals provide daily support during office hours, small group sessions, and interventions as needed.
- Weekly check-ins with advisors ensure students remain on track with ILPs and goals.
- Home school students (fully remote learning) check in with staff daily during school hours and structure their day according to their needs.

This calendar and schedule provide structure and consistency while supporting the flexibility inherent in a personalized, alternative learning environment.

## BUSINESS OPERATIONS

See Submission Procedures

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

**Transportation:**

- For students enrolled in on-campus sessions, transportation may be provided via coordination with the Stevensville School District bus services.
- The school will ensure that all students, including those in rural areas, have equitable access to any on-site resources.

**Food Service:**

- Students attending on-site classes have access to school-provided meals through the district's food service program, following USDA nutritional standards.
- Students learning entirely from home will be supported through community meal programs, or coordination with local providers, ensuring that no student experiences food insecurity.

**Technology and Connectivity Support:**

- The charter school will provide technical support to students who choose online or fully remote pathways.
- Staff will provide ongoing assistance to ensure students can access online instruction seamlessly.

**Other Ancillary Services:**

- **Counseling and mental health support:** Students will have access to district school counselors in person, by phone, or virtually. Students may also have access to district contracted resources.

- **Special education and related services:** As described in Question 7, these services will be delivered virtually or in-person as needed.
- **Library and learning resources:** Digital library resources and course materials will be provided through the online learning platform, with optional on-campus access to physical resources.

By leveraging district services, community resources, and digital solutions, the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School ensures that all students have equitable access to necessary operational supports, even in a primarily remote learning environment.

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School provides a variety of cocurricular and extracurricular opportunities to support student engagement, social-emotional development, and real-world skills. Programs are designed to be flexible and accessible to students participating in person or through online and remote learning.

### *Cocurricular Programs*

- **Project-Based Learning (PBL) Modules:** Students engage in interdisciplinary projects connected to their coursework, allowing them to apply skills in real-world contexts.
- **Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs):** Academic goal-setting, reflection, and personalized skill development are integrated into daily learning.
- **Career Exploration Opportunities:** Partnerships with local businesses, postsecondary institutions, and community organizations provide internships, mentorships, work experiences and job shadowing aligned with student interests.
- **Access to All Clubs and Organizations Currently School Sponsored:** Music/Band/Choir, Agriculture/FFA, Family Consumer Sciences/FCCLA, Business/DECA

### *Extracurricular Programs*

- **All MSHA Activities:** Students may participate in all school sponsored Montana High School Association Activities and Athletics currently offered at Stevensville Public Schools.
- **Service Learning and Community Engagement:** Students may participate in volunteer projects, or local civic activities, such as Key Club, National Honor Society, Chess Club, etc.

### *Funding and Delivery*

- Cocurricular and extracurricular programs will be funded through a combination of charter school budget allocations, grants, and community partnerships.
- Many virtual programs have minimal cost, leveraging free or low-cost online platforms and community volunteers.
- For programs requiring materials or specialized instruction, additional funding may come from parent contributions, fundraising, or local sponsorships, ensuring that all students can participate regardless of financial means.
- Staff and sponsors provide supervision and mentorship for both virtual and optional on-campus activities.

This approach ensures that students have a rich, engaging, and well-rounded experience beyond core academics while maintaining the flexibility and accessibility essential to a remote and alternative learning environment.

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will implement a comprehensive financial plan and policies to ensure responsible management of public funds and compliance with all state and federal requirements.

### **1. Budgeting and Financial Planning**

- Annual budgets will be prepared by the Charter School Director in collaboration with the district Business Manager.
- Budgets will include projected revenues, expenses, and reserves for instructional materials, personnel, technology, operations, and contingency planning.
- The charter will prepare multi-year financial projections to ensure sustainability and support growth over the five-year charter term.

### **2. Revenue Sources**

- State funding per student as provided through Montana's public-school funding formula.
- Federal grants, including Title I, II, and IDEA funding, where applicable.
- Local revenues, donations, and grants to support supplemental programs.
- Any allowable program-specific funding from partnerships or philanthropic sources.

### **3. Financial Controls**

- All financial transactions will follow district policies and Montana law for procurement, payroll, and expenditure authorization.
- Dual-signature requirements will be implemented for checks and payments exceeding a threshold set by district policy.
- Regular reconciliation of accounts will be conducted by the Business Manager.
- Monthly financial reports will be reviewed by the Charter School Director, Principal, and Superintendent to ensure transparency and accountability.

### **4. Audit and Oversight**

- An annual independent audit will be conducted in accordance with Montana law and district policy.
- Audit reports will be submitted to the Governing Board and filed with the Montana Office of Public Instruction as required.
- Any findings from audits will be addressed promptly, and corrective action plans will be implemented as necessary.

### **5. Fiscal Policies**

- Funds will be used exclusively to support the educational mission of the charter school.
- Reserve funds will be maintained to address unexpected expenditures or enrollment fluctuations.
- Financial policies will ensure that funds are allocated equitably across instructional programs, technology, student support services, and administrative needs.

This financial framework ensures strong fiscal management, transparency, and sustainability while supporting the charter school's mission to provide a high-quality, personalized, and flexible learning environment.

## **22. Describe the insurance coverage that will be obtained.**

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will obtain comprehensive insurance coverage to protect students, staff, and the school's operations, consistent with district policies and Montana law. Coverage will include, but is not limited to:

### **1. General Liability Insurance**

- Protects the school against claims arising from bodily injury, property damage, or personal injury occurring on school property or during school-sponsored events, including optional on-campus activities.

### **2. Property and Equipment Insurance**

- Covers school-owned or leased property, including technology devices, instructional materials, and furniture, against loss or damage due to fire, theft, vandalism, or natural disasters.

- Includes coverage for digital equipment used for remote learning, including laptops, tablets, and servers.

**3. Workers' Compensation Insurance**

- Provides coverage for all employees in case of work-related injuries or illnesses, in accordance with Montana state law.

**4. Professional Liability / Educators' Errors & Omissions**

- Protects teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals against claims of professional negligence, errors, or omissions related to instruction or student services.

**5. Automobile Insurance (if applicable)**

- Covers school-owned vehicles used for student transport or staff travel during school-related activities, if transportation is provided for on-campus sessions or field trips.

**6. Cyber Liability Insurance**

- Provides protection for digital learning platforms, student data, and privacy breaches, which is especially critical given the charter school's reliance on online instruction and technology.

**7. Other Policies**

- Umbrella liability coverage may be obtained to provide additional protection above standard policy limits.
- Insurance policies will be reviewed annually to ensure coverage is adequate for the school's operations and any new initiatives.

All insurance coverage will be maintained in compliance with Montana law, district requirements, and contractual obligations with vendors and partners. The Charter School Director, in consultation with the Superintendent and district Business Manager, will oversee all insurance policies to ensure ongoing risk management and protection.

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

#### *Budget Assumptions*

- Enrollment:** Year 1 = 55–65 students; projected growth to 75–85 students by Year 5.
- Staffing:** Year 1 includes 1 Director, 3 certified teachers, 1 paraprofessional, 0.5 SPED teacher, 0.5 administrative assistant. Staff increases proportionally as enrollment grows.
- Instructional Costs:** Digital curriculum subscriptions, virtual platforms, and assessments for core and elective courses.
- Technology:** Devices, and software licenses provided for all students.
- Facilities:** Minimal on-campus space for assessments, small group support, and optional activities.
- Ancillary Services:** Counseling, SPED services, minimal transportation, and optional on-campus activities.
- Revenue:** Primarily Montana state per-pupil funding, basic entitlement, supplemented by federal grants (Title I, IDEA) and occasional donations/grants.

#### *Startup Budget (Year 1)*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount (\$)</b>
Personnel (salaries & benefits)	305000
Digital Curriculum & LMS	200000
Technology & Devices	80000
Facilities & Utilities	39000
Professional Development	15000
Ancillary Services (Counseling, SPED support)	200000
Office Supplies & Operations	20000
Contingency / Miscellaneous / Reserves	39401
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>898,401</b>

**Revenue (Assuming 60 students @ \$8,900 per student + Basic Entitlement): \$898,401**

*Five-Year Budget Projections*

Year	Enrollment	Revenue (\$)	Expenses (\$)	Notes
1	60	898,401	854,000,	Startup year, lean staffing
2	65	942,901	895,755	Add SPED Support, increase curriculum costs
3	70	987,401	938,031	Expand paraprofessionals and SPED support
4	75	1,031,901	980,306	Add SPED Support, Expand electives
5	80	1,076,401	1022581	Full staffing, stable operations, small reserve

**Notes on Assumptions:**

- Revenue assumes standard Montana per-pupil funding; does not include potential additional grants or donations.
- Expenses increase with staffing needs, technology refresh, and ancillary supports as enrollment grows.
- Budget assumes conservative enrollment growth and minimal unforeseen expenses.

This five-year financial projection demonstrates a sustainable, scalable, and responsible financial model for the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School.

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

*Assumptions*

1. **Startup Timing:** School opens August 2026; initial expenses occur during spring and summer for hiring, technology, and curriculum setup.
2. **Revenue Timing:** Per-pupil funding is received monthly starting in September 2026. Federal grants (Title I/IDEA) may be received quarterly.
3. **Enrollment:** 45 students in Year 1.
4. **Expenses:** Major startup costs include personnel, technology, curriculum, and operational setup, paid monthly or upfront where applicable.
5. **Contingency:** Minimal reserve of \$10,000 included for unexpected costs.

*Startup Cash Flow (Pre-Opening: May–August 2026)*

Month	Cash In (\$)	Cash Out (\$)	Net Cash (\$)
May 2026	0	20,000	(20,000)
June 2026	0	50,000	(70,000)
July 2026	0	60,000	(130,000)
August 2026	0	40,000	(170,000)

*Startup costs include curriculum licenses, devices, facility prep, and staff onboarding.*

*First-Year Cash Flow (September 2026 – May 2027)*

Month	Cash In (\$)	Cash Out (\$)	Net Cash (\$)
September	44,500	40,050	4,450
October	44,500	40,050	8,900
November	44,500	40,050	13,350
December	44,500	40,050	17,800
January	44,500	40,050	22,250
February	44,500	40,050	26,700
March	44,500	40,050	31,150
April	44,500	40,050	35,600

May	44,500	40,050	40,150
June/July/Aug	133,500	120,150	53,500

*Cash inflows assume monthly per-pupil funding (\$8,900 per student ÷ 12 months). Cash outflows include salaries, benefits, technology maintenance, and operational costs. Positive cash balance by December ensures stable operations and ability to cover summer startup expenses in Year 2. This cash flow projection demonstrates that the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School can maintain liquidity, meet financial obligations, and launch successfully while gradually building reserves for future growth.*

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

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School anticipates supplemental fundraising to enhance student learning experiences, provide enrichment opportunities, and support technology initiatives.

### 1. Fundraising Goals

- Raise approximately \$10,000–\$15,000 annually to support cocurricular programs, elective course materials, and student enrichment activities.
- Funds may also contribute to technology refreshers and virtual learning tools beyond the standard curriculum.

### 2. Fundraising Strategies

- **Grant Applications:** Seek local, state, and national educational grants for technology, digital curriculum, or innovation in personalized learning.
- **Partnership Sponsorships:** Collaborate with local businesses and organizations for sponsorship of student projects, internships, and career exploration programs.

### 3. Evidence of Support

- The Stevensville community has a history of supporting educational initiatives, demonstrated through donations, volunteer engagement, and participation in district events.
- Letters of support from local organizations, parents, and community stakeholders will accompany the charter application to demonstrate commitment.

This approach ensures that fundraising efforts supplement state and federal funding without creating a barrier for student participation, while enhancing the school's mission of flexible, personalized, and technology-driven learning.

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

### Primary Facilities:

- The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will operate primarily in a designated space on the Stevensville High School campus for:
  - In-person instruction, assessments, and testing
  - Small group tutoring sessions
  - Optional enrichment and extracurricular activities

### Facility Features:

- Secure, technology-equipped rooms for assessments
- Flexible spaces that can accommodate up to 20 students for small-group learning
- Access to district amenities as needed (library, labs, gym for optional activities)

### Backup and Contingency Plans:

- **Remote Continuity:** If the physical facility becomes unavailable, instruction continues seamlessly from home through online portals.
- **Technology Redundancy:** The school maintains loaner devices, software licenses, and virtual platforms to ensure students and staff can continue learning during technology or facility disruptions.

- **Alternative On-Campus Locations:** In the event the primary facility is unavailable (maintenance, emergencies), alternate district spaces or community locations will be used for essential in-person activities.
- **Health and Safety Contingencies:** The school will follow public health guidelines for in-person gatherings, including hybrid or fully virtual adjustments if necessary.

This plan ensures that the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School has flexible, safe, and reliable facilities to support both online and in-person learning while maintaining continuity under all circumstances.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEED

See Submission Procedures

### 27. Describe the specific evidence of significant community support.

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School has garnered **strong support from the local community** for its mission to provide flexible, personalized, and technology-driven learning opportunities. Specific evidence includes:

#### 1. Letters of Support

- Written endorsements from parents, local businesses, and community leaders emphasizing the need for alternative learning options in the Bitterroot Valley.
- Letters from postsecondary institutions and local organizations committing to partnerships for career exploration, internships, and mentorship programs.

#### 3. District and Staff Support

- Support from Stevensville School District administrators, teachers, and counselors, including participation in planning committees and advisory roles, demonstrates internal buy-in.
- Paraprofessional and staff interest in supporting the new school underscores operational feasibility.

#### 4. Advisory Committee

- Community partners have pledged in-kind support, including volunteer mentoring, facility use, and professional development resources.

#### 5. Evidence from Prior Programs

- The district's experience with the alternative learning model (currently 30 students, with a waiting list) and online courses (currently 23 students, with new enrollees each semester) shows successful student engagement and parent satisfaction, and has prevented student dropouts. This reflects a strong foundation of support for expanding these models through the charter school.
- This combination of letters, district collaboration, and community involvement demonstrates a solid base of support, confirming that the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will meet a community-identified need and thrive in the local context.

### 28. Describe the opportunities and expectations for parent involvement.

The Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School will actively encourage parent involvement to support student learning, engagement, and overall school success. Opportunities and expectations include:

#### 1. Participation in Advisory

- Parents may serve on the Stakeholder Advisory Council to provide feedback on curriculum, extracurricular activities, and school policies.
- Feedback from parents will be solicited regularly to inform decision-making and improve school programs.

*2. Engagement in Student Learning*

- Parents are expected to support daily learning routines, monitor progress through the learning management system, and collaborate with teachers to address challenges.
- Optional workshops and orientation sessions will equip parents with tools to help students succeed in a personalized learning environment.

*3. Communication and Conferences*

- Regular communication will be maintained through emails, video calls, and parent portals.
- Biannual conferences or check-ins will allow onsite parents to review student progress, Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), and set goals collaboratively with teachers and staff.

*4. Volunteer Opportunities*

- Parents may volunteer for virtual or on-campus activities, such as mentoring, career exploration support, extracurricular clubs, and school events.
- Opportunities will be flexible to accommodate parents' schedules and availability.

*5. Fundraising and Community Support*

- Parents are encouraged to participate in fundraising initiatives, community events, and partnerships that enhance student learning experiences and school programs.

By fostering strong collaboration between families and school staff, the Stevensville Alternative Steps Charter School ensures that students receive consistent support across home and school environments, enhancing academic achievement and social-emotional development.

*Questions? Contact [bpe@mt.gov](mailto:bpe@mt.gov)*