POLSON SCHOOL DISTRICT #23
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

PUBLIC CHARTER APPLICATION COVER PAGE

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

Name of Public Charter School **Polson Connections Charter**

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

Polson School District #23

Contact Information for the Governing Board Chair

Contact Person: Chanel Lake (**Name**) Polson School District Board Chair (**Title**)

Contact Address: 111 4th Avenue East, Polson, MT, 59860

Telephone Number: 406-883-6351

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Contact Information for the Person Completing this Application

Contact Person: Andrew Fors (**Name**) Polson School District Superintendent (**Title**)

Contact Address: 111 4th Avenue East, Polson, MT, 59860

Telephone Number: 406-883-6351

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Local Board of Trustee Evidence

Check One: _X_ Approved by existing local school board ___ Refused approval by existing local school board

See Appendix A for evidence of school board minutes and agendas.



Public Charter Application

Name of Public Charter School: ____Polson Connections Charter___

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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.

Opening Date: _August 2027_____ Public Charter Term Length: _5 years_____
Grades to be served: _6-12_____
Minimum Enrollment Per Year: _60_____
Planned Enrollment Per Year: _85-100_____
Maximum Enrollment Per Year: _126_____

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 _X_ Middle Grades Program _X_ 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				
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Year 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	10	11	12	15	17	77
Year 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	10	11	12	17	19	81
Year 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	12	12	12	20	22	90
Year 4	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	13	13	14	23	25	100
Year 5	0	0	0	0		0	5	7	15	14	17	26	28	112

Polson School District #23 proposes to establish Polson Connections Charter, a public charter school serving students in grades 6–12 through flexible, personalized, proficiency-based learning that connects academics with career opportunities, culture, community, and postsecondary preparation. Recognizing that students have different strengths, interests, circumstances, and goals, the charter will provide individualized educational pathways that meet students where they are while maintaining high expectations for academic growth and achievement. Building on established district programs, including Polson Alternative Learning (PAL), Indigenous Immersion Program, School-to-Work, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and dual enrollment, the charter will expand opportunities for students to engage in meaningful learning beyond the traditional classroom and school schedule.

Polson Connections Charter will offer two pathways: Career & Community Connections and Cultural Connections**.** The Career & Community Connections pathway will emphasize flexible scheduling and personalized academics including online learning to accommodate work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships, CTE coursework, industry-recognized credentials, and dual enrollment opportunities through partners such as Salish Kootenai College and Flathead Valley Community College. The Cultural Connections pathway will build upon the district's Indigenous Immersion program, providing in-person, experiential, and place-based learning that strengthens students' connections to culture, identity, community, and the natural environment. Through relationships with tribal knowledge keepers, cultural leaders, and community partners, students will develop a stronger sense of belonging, cultural identity, resilience, and personal well-being while engaging in meaningful academic learning.

Personalized, proficiency-based learning will be the academic foundation of both pathways**.** Students will work with staff and families to develop Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) that identify academic needs, strengths, goals, graduation requirements, and meaningful learning opportunities. Edmentum and other state approved online learning platforms, including Montana Digital Academy and BYU Independent Study, will provide flexible access to standards-aligned coursework. Edmentum's Exact Path will support individualized reading and mathematics intervention through diagnostic assessments, targeted learning pathways, and ongoing progress monitoring. Rather than allowing traditional timelines or instructional structures to become barriers to success, students will receive the time, support, and multiple opportunities needed to demonstrate proficiency and make measurable academic progress.

A significant strength of Polson School District is its established network of community, tribal, workforce, and postsecondary partnerships. Existing relationships with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Tribal Education Department, Lake County Job Service, Reach Higher Montana, Native Youth Community Project, Upward Bound, Salish Kootenai College, Flathead Valley Community College, Vocational Rehabilitation, St. Joseph Medical Center, Polson Health & Rehabilitation, and

numerous local employers and organizations will help connect students to authentic learning experiences, mentorship, career exploration, cultural enrichment, and postsecondary opportunities. The district's partnership with CSKT Tribal Education through the Project AWARE grant, which supported the development of the Indigenous Immersion program, provides a strong foundation for continued culturally grounded learning.

Charter designation will allow the district to move beyond the limitations of its existing programs by establishing a distinct school where flexibility in scheduling, pacing, instructional delivery, and demonstration of proficiency is embedded in the educational model. While PAL currently provides a valuable alternative for credit-deficient seniors, Polson Connections Charter will create a proactive educational option for a broader population of students, including those seeking advanced career-connected experiences, stronger cultural connections, or a learning environment better suited to their individual needs. The goal is not simply to offer an alternative to traditional education, but to increase engagement, remove barriers, and create meaningful pathways to success.

Polson Connections Charter will advance the district's mission of inspiring self-directed learners in an interconnected world and its PRIDE values of Partnerships, Relationships, Integrity, Diversity, and Excellence. By prioritizing relationships, student ownership, academic growth, and meaningful connections to the world beyond school, the charter will empower students to become confident, capable, and future-ready learners.

See Appendix G for Integrated Strategic Action Plan with Graduate Profile

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

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

Mission: To empower self-directed learners through flexible, personalized education that fosters academic growth, meaningful relationships, and connections to culture, community, and career.

Vision: Every student connected, empowered, and prepared for their future.

Polson Connections Charter is grounded in the belief that all students can achieve at high levels when provided with the right opportunities, relationships, and supports. A traditional educational structure does not meet the needs of every learner, and students should not be limited by rigid schedules, uniform pacing, or a single approach to demonstrating their learning. Serving a diverse rural community on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Polson School District is committed to meeting students where they are and creating flexible, personalized pathways that honor their individual strengths, circumstances, cultural identities, interests, and aspirations.

The charter will build upon the district's established strengths in alternative education, Indigenous Immersion, Career and Technical Education, School-to-Work, work-based learning, dual enrollment, and community partnerships. Through the Career & Community Connections and Cultural Connections pathways, students will have opportunities to connect rigorous academics with authentic experiences that increase engagement, strengthen relationships, and develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed for future success. An emphasis on proficiency-based learning will ensure that students receive individualized support and opportunities to demonstrate mastery, with academic growth and achievement remaining central to each student's educational experience.

The Cultural Connections pathway will be especially meaningful within the context of the Flathead Indian Reservation. Building upon the district's Indigenous Immersion program and its partnership with CSKT Tribal Education, the pathway will provide culturally grounded, experiential learning opportunities that connect students with tribal knowledge keepers, community members, local history, traditions, language, and the natural environment. These experiences will support students in developing a positive sense of identity, belonging, resilience, and connection to their community while strengthening academic engagement. The Career & Community Connections pathway will similarly connect students to their community through meaningful work-based learning, apprenticeships, mentorships, industry experiences, and postsecondary partnerships. Flexible online and in-person coursework will allow students to structure their academic schedules around these opportunities, gaining valuable real-world experience while continuing to progress toward graduation. By connecting academic learning to authentic career experiences, students will see the relevance of their education and take greater ownership of their futures.

The Polson Middle School Charter will serve as an intentional entry point into the district's personalized learning model, connecting flexible and blended learning with career exploration, CTE, STEAM, work-based learning, cultural learning, and community partnerships. Students will build strong academic foundations while developing the independence, self-advocacy, collaboration, and problem-solving skills necessary for future success.

At the middle school level, students will not be expected to choose a career, but they will have meaningful opportunities to explore, experience, and discover. Students will participate in career and college exploration, CTE and STEAM experiences, job shadows, mentorships, field trips, community-based projects, service learning, and place-based cultural experiences connected to the Flathead Reservation and greater Polson community. Flexible scheduling and online coursework, when appropriate, will expand access while intentional in-person experiences ensure that students maintain strong relationships and connections to people, places, and opportunities beyond the classroom. These experiences will introduce students to the pathways available at Polson High School, including PAL, work-based learning, CTE, dual enrollment, and other personalized learning opportunities.

Together, the middle and high school programs will create a 6–12 continuum from exploration to purposeful pathway development. Middle school students will gain exposure to a broad range of careers, postsecondary options, and community opportunities, then use those experiences to make increasingly informed choices as they enter high school. The goal is not to track students into a career at an early age, but to ensure they have the experiences, relationships, and skills needed to pursue college, technical education, workforce, entrepreneurship, or other postsecondary pathways. The charter directly aligns with the district mission of inspiring self-directed learners in an interconnected world and with the PRIDE values of Partnerships, Relationships, Integrity, Diversity, and Excellence.

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

Polson Connections Charter will serve students in grades 6–12 who seek or would benefit from a more flexible, individualized educational environment that connects academic learning with their interests, strengths, culture, community, career goals, and postsecondary plans. The school will serve students interested in culturally responsive and place-based learning, Career and Technical Education (CTE), work-based learning, apprenticeships, industry-recognized certifications, dual enrollment, college preparation, and other pathways toward postsecondary education and employment. The charter will allow

students to develop an individualized learning plan that provides flexibility in pacing, scheduling, and learning environments, making it possible to pursue meaningful cultural, career, community, and postsecondary experiences alongside their academic coursework.

The school is intended to serve a diverse student population, including students who are college-bound, career-focused, interested in skilled trades or certifications, seeking meaningful work-based learning experiences, or interested in developing a stronger connection to culture and community. Cultural Connections will provide opportunities for students of all backgrounds to engage with local culture, history, community, and place through experiential and culturally responsive learning. Career & Community Connection will provide students with opportunities to connect academic learning to CTE, employment, internships, apprenticeships, certifications, dual enrollment, and other postsecondary experiences. Students may draw from both pathways as they develop an individualized learning plan that reflects their goals, interests, and needs.

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

Polson Connections Charter will begin student recruitment during the district's annual course-registration and transition process for the upcoming school year. Recruitment will include direct communication with students and families, presentations at Polson Middle School and Polson High School as appropriate, information on the district website and social media, counselor referrals, family information sessions, and outreach to students who may be seeking a different educational pathway. Recruitment materials will clearly communicate the purpose of the charter, the two pathways available to students, how individualized learning plans work, and expectations for active participation and progress toward individualized learning goals.

The recruitment and enrollment process will be designed to help students and families determine whether Polson Connections Charter is an appropriate educational option for their goals and needs. Enrollment materials will describe the charter as a rigorous educational option requiring active participation, regular communication with school staff, progress toward individualized learning goals, and engagement in the student's learning plan. Students and families who enroll will participate in an orientation process that introduces the school's expectations, available pathways and learning options, and communication and progress-monitoring processes.

If enrollment rises above the projected enrollment identified in this application and the administration determines that increased enrollment could negatively impact student instruction or the school's ability to provide its educational model effectively, the district will institute a lottery-driven enrollment process that ensures all eligible in-district students have an equal opportunity to attend Polson Connections Charter.

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.

Polson Connections Charter will provide an individualized 6–12 academic program designed to connect each student's learning with their interests, strengths, culture, community, career goals, and postsecondary plans. The program will be organized around an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), developed collaboratively by the student, family, and charter staff, which identifies graduation requirements, areas for growth, individualized goals, and the coursework and learning experiences that best support the

student's goals. Based on the ILP, students may complete their coursework through in-person instruction, online learning, accredited college coursework, or a combination of these options, with flexibility in scheduling, pacing, and learning environment. State approved online providers such as, but not limited to, Edmentum, Montana Digital Academy, and BYU Independent Study may be used when appropriate to support a student's individual goals. The school will use these options to provide students with appropriate levels of challenge and support while creating a course of study that allows them to demonstrate proficiency and make progress toward their postsecondary goals.

The academic program will use a proficiency-based approach in which students are expected to demonstrate the knowledge and skills identified in applicable Montana standards and course expectations. Students who demonstrate proficiency may have opportunities to advance more quickly, pursue advanced coursework, participate in dual enrollment, or engage in other learning experiences aligned with their goals. Students who need additional time or support will receive targeted instruction, intervention, and adjustments to their learning plan. The ILP will also connect academic requirements to meaningful experiences beyond traditional coursework. When appropriate, students may demonstrate learning through internships, apprenticeships, work-based learning, independent study, industry-recognized certifications, community-based projects, dual enrollment, and other approved experiences. These experiences will be intentionally connected to academic standards and the student's educational and postsecondary goals.

The academic program will include two interconnected pathways: **Cultural Connection** and **Career & Community Connection**. Both pathways connect academic learning to meaningful experiences, and students may participate in experiences from either or both based on their interests and ILP goals.

- **Cultural Connection** will provide opportunities for students to connect academic learning with culture, community, history, environment, and place. Building on the strengths and practices of Polson School District's Indigenous Immersion program, students will engage in in-person, experiential, place-based, project-based, and community-connected learning. Students will have opportunities to learn through relationships with community members, knowledge keepers, authentic experiences, and the cultural, historical, and environmental resources of the Flathead Indian Reservation and surrounding communities.
- **Career & Community Connection** will connect academic learning to career exploration, Career and Technical Education, employment, internships, apprenticeships, industry-recognized certifications, dual enrollment, and other postsecondary opportunities. With guidance from charter staff, students will explore and deepen their understanding of their interests, strengths, and potential career and educational pathways. Students will then engage in hands-on experiences such as career exploration, mentoring, job shadows, community-based projects, internships, work-based learning, college coursework, certifications, and other authentic learning opportunities. These experiences will help students make increasingly informed decisions about their futures while developing the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed to define and work toward their postsecondary goals.

The charter will build upon Polson School District's existing relationships with community, cultural, workforce, and postsecondary partners. Partnerships may include Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Tribal Education Department, Lake County Job Service, Reach Higher Montana, Native Youth Community Project, Upward Bound, Salish Kootenai College, Flathead Valley Community

College, Vocational Rehabilitation, St. Joseph Medical Center, Polson Health & Rehabilitation, local businesses and employers, cultural organizations, and other regional partners (See Appendix B for letters of support). These relationships will provide opportunities for mentoring, career exploration, job shadows, internships, work-based learning, cultural learning, postsecondary planning, and authentic application of academic skills.

Annual Assessment of Student Achievement

Student achievement will be assessed using multiple measures of academic performance and growth. Students will begin with available academic data and appropriate baseline assessments to identify strengths, areas for growth, and specific skills or standards requiring additional attention. Individual academic growth goals will be established through the ILP and monitored throughout the year. Assessment measures will include, as appropriate, Montana state and district assessments, literacy and mathematics growth measures, standards-aligned course assessments, formative assessments, and evidence of proficiency toward course and graduation requirements. Student progress toward individual academic goals identified in the ILP will also be reviewed.

Assessment results will be used continuously to identify areas requiring additional support or enrichment, adjust instruction and pacing, and revise ILP goals as appropriate. Student progress will be monitored throughout the school year to ensure students are making expected progress toward academic standards, graduation requirements, and individual learning goals. This ongoing review process will inform instructional decisions and ensure that the flexibility of the program continues to support strong academic growth and proficiency.

See Appendix G for Integrated Strategic Action Plan with Graduate Profile

See Appendix B for evidence of partnerships.

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

Polson Connections Charter does not anticipate requiring any variances from existing standards, rules, or regulations. The charter will operate under applicable Montana Administrative Rules and existing Polson School District Board policies that support the proposed educational model, including Policy 1015FE – Personalized Learning Opportunities and Policy 1005FE – Proficiency-Based ANB.

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

- **Instructional Design:** Polson Connections Charter will provide a flexible, individualized learning environment in which students work with a designated advisor to develop and monitor an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The ILP will identify each student's graduation requirements, academic goals, areas for growth, interests, and appropriate learning experiences. The advisor will serve as the student's primary point of contact, providing instructional support, monitoring progress, coordinating learning experiences, communicating with families, and helping students adjust their ILP as their needs and goals develop.
- **Learning Environment:** The charter will operate within dedicated classroom spaces located at Polson Middle School and Polson High School, providing students with access to classrooms, conference rooms, breakout spaces, and other appropriate school resources. The learning

environment will support in-person, online, hybrid, and community-based learning. Students will not be required to follow a single school-wide schedule; instead, their schedules will be structured around the requirements and goals identified in their ILP. Students may complete coursework through in-person instruction, approved online providers, accredited college coursework, or a combination of these options. The flexibility of the learning environment will also allow students to participate in internships, apprenticeships, employment, work-based learning, cultural experiences, community-based projects, and other approved learning experiences when appropriate.

- **Class Size and Structure:** Class sizes will be maintained below applicable Montana accreditation standards in order to support personalization, meaningful teacher-student relationships, and individualized instruction. Instructional groupings may include whole-group, small-group, individualized, and independent learning based on the course and student needs. The charter's structure will allow students to work at an appropriate pace while maintaining regular contact with their teachers and advisor. Students who require additional support will receive targeted instruction, intervention, and additional opportunities to demonstrate learning, while students who demonstrate readiness may pursue advanced coursework, dual enrollment, accelerated learning, or other opportunities aligned with their ILP.
- **Curriculum Overview:** Polson Connections Charter will provide a standards-aligned curriculum that meets Montana standards and graduation requirements and draws from Polson School District-adopted curriculum and instructional materials, approved online coursework, accredited college coursework, Career and Technical Education opportunities, and other appropriate learning resources based on individual student needs and goals. The source, format, and delivery of coursework may vary by student and may include in-person instruction, online learning, college coursework, or a combination of these approaches. The curriculum will be organized around the charter's two interconnected pathways: Cultural Connections and Career & Community Connection. Cultural Connections will incorporate place-based, experiential, project-based, and culturally responsive learning. Career & Community Connection will connect academic learning with career exploration, CTE, internships, apprenticeships, employment, industry-recognized certifications, dual enrollment, and other postsecondary opportunities. Students may participate in experiences from either or both pathways according to their ILP.
- **Teaching Methods:** Instruction will use a combination of direct instruction, individualized instruction, small-group instruction, project-based learning, experiential learning, place-based learning, inquiry, online and blended learning, and work-based learning. Teachers will serve as instructors, advisors, and learning facilitators, providing students with clear expectations, appropriate instruction and feedback, and support in developing increasing independence and ownership of their learning. Instructional decisions will be informed by student performance and progress data. Teachers will regularly review student work, assessments, coursework, and other evidence of learning to determine whether students are making expected progress. Instruction, pacing, supports, and learning experiences will be adjusted as needed to help each student demonstrate proficiency and make progress toward graduation and postsecondary goals.

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.

Polson Connections Charter will be a public school within Polson School District #23 and will serve students in accordance with all applicable federal and state requirements. A licensed special education teacher will be part of the charter's staffing and will coordinate with District special education staff and related-service providers to ensure students receive the services, accommodations, modifications, specialized instruction, related services, and procedural protections identified through the District's special education processes and each student's IEP. Charter staff will work collaboratively to ensure students have access to the full range of academic, cultural, career, and experiential opportunities available through the charter.

English Learners will receive appropriate language-development services and accommodations based on identified needs and District procedures. Students who need additional academic support will receive targeted instruction, increased teacher contact, adjusted pacing, progress monitoring, and additional instructional support. The charter's flexible structure will allow staff to respond to individual skill gaps and learning needs without requiring every student to move through coursework at the same pace. These supports will be coordinated with each student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) when appropriate.

Students who are ready for accelerated or advanced learning will be able to progress more quickly when they demonstrate proficiency and may access advanced coursework, dual enrollment, independent study, CTE pathways, work-based learning, and other enrichment opportunities as appropriate. The charter will utilize the District's K–12 Gifted Education Specialist to support the identification and educational planning of gifted students and to help connect students with appropriate opportunities for advanced learning, enrichment, and increased challenge.

The District will use existing MTSS, assessment, special education, Section 504, English Learner, gifted/talented, and student-support systems rather than creating parallel systems. Charter staff will work collaboratively with District personnel, families, and students to identify needs, monitor progress, provide appropriate supports, and adjust the student's learning plan and educational experiences as needed.

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

Students enrolled in Polson Connections Charter will follow Polson School District Board policies and applicable student conduct and discipline procedures. The charter will establish clear expectations for attendance and engagement, academic integrity, appropriate technology use, behavior in charter learning spaces, and conduct in work-based, postsecondary, and community settings. Because students may participate in flexible learning arrangements rather than a traditional bell schedule, expectations for student conduct and participation will apply across the settings in which learning occurs.

The charter’s small, relationship-centered structure will emphasize prevention, early communication, problem solving, and appropriate interventions to support student success. Students who are not making expected academic or engagement progress will receive additional support and interventions appropriate to their individual needs. Student progress and support needs may also be addressed through the student’s Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

For significant behavioral or safety concerns, the charter will follow applicable District policies and procedures and will involve appropriate District personnel and, when necessary, outside agencies or

law enforcement. Expectations and responsibilities will be clearly communicated to students and families as part of the enrollment and orientation process.

For special education students, disciplinary decisions will follow IDEA, Section 504, District policy, and applicable procedural safeguards, including manifestation determinations and continuation of required educational services when applicable. The charter's licensed special education staff will coordinate with District personnel and the student's IEP team, as appropriate, to ensure disciplinary decisions consider the student's disability-related needs and educational protections.

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

Personalized and proficiency-based learning will be foundational to Polson Connections Charter. Each student will develop an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with support from a designated advisor, in collaboration with the student's family and school team. The ILP will identify the student's graduation requirements, academic goals, areas for growth, interests, career and postsecondary goals, and appropriate learning experiences. The plan will be reviewed regularly and adjusted as students demonstrate progress, develop new interests, or their needs and goals change. This approach directly supports Polson School District's commitment to developing self-directed learners and the student competencies and outcomes identified in the District's Graduate Profile and Integrated Strategic Action Plan (See Appendix G).

The charter will provide flexibility in how, where, when, and at what pace students learn. Depending on the student's ILP and goals, coursework may be completed through in-person instruction, approved online providers, accredited college coursework, or a combination of these options. Students may also participate in internships, apprenticeships, employment, work-based learning, cultural experiences, community-based projects, independent study, industry-recognized certifications, dual enrollment, and other approved learning experiences as part of their educational plan. The charter's two interconnected pathways, Cultural Connections and Career & Community Connection, will provide students with opportunities to connect academic learning to culture, community, career interests, and postsecondary goals.

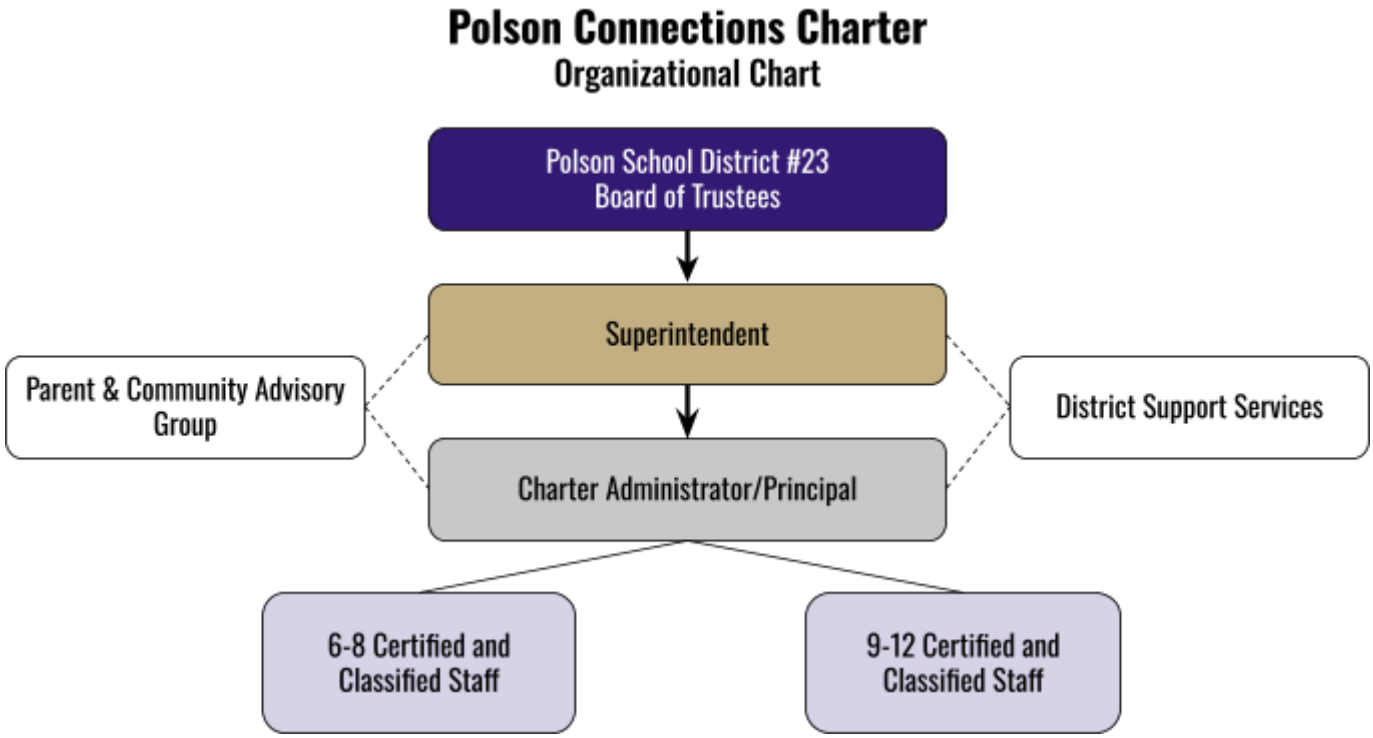
Proficiency-based learning recognizes that students may need different amounts of time, support, and practice to demonstrate learning. Students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge and skills aligned with Montana standards, course expectations, and graduation requirements. Students who need additional time, instruction, or support will receive appropriate opportunities to continue learning and demonstrate proficiency. Students who demonstrate proficiency may advance to additional coursework, advanced learning, dual enrollment, or other opportunities rather than being limited by a common pace. The charter will use multiple measures of learning, including coursework, assessments, projects, student work, and other appropriate evidence of proficiency. Flexibility in pacing and learning environment will not reduce academic expectations or rigor.

Student ownership will be intentionally developed through goal setting, progress monitoring, reflection, career and postsecondary exploration, and regular ILP reviews. Advisors and teachers will help students understand their progress, identify areas for growth, make informed choices about learning opportunities, and increasingly take responsibility for their education. This approach directly supports Polson School District's commitment to developing self-directed learners and provides a structure in which students can take meaningful ownership of their academic, cultural, career, and postsecondary pathways.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

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.

Polson Connections Charter will operate as a public charter school within Polson School District #23 and under the authority of the Polson School District #23 Board of Trustees. The organizational structure below illustrates the proposed lines of authority, reporting relationships, district support services, and advisory/community relationships. District support services will be provided through existing district systems and personnel, as appropriate. Advisory and community partners will provide input and support related to programming, student needs, partnerships, and continuous improvement but will not have independent governance authority.



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

- The Polson School District #23 Board of Trustees will govern Polson Connections Charter and retain ultimate responsibility for policy, budget, staffing, the charter contract, and major program decisions. The Board will provide oversight of the charter in accordance with District policy and applicable state and federal requirements.
- The Superintendent will provide district-level administrative oversight of the charter, including fiscal and operational oversight, compliance, and supervision of the Charter

Administrator/Principal. The Superintendent will ensure that the charter remains aligned with District policies, strategic priorities, and the approved charter contract.

- The Charter Administrator/Principal will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of Polson Connections Charter and implementation of its educational model. Responsibilities will include enrollment and orientation, instructional leadership, staff supervision, student progress and ILP oversight, family communication, school climate, and coordination of district services and community, workforce, cultural, and postsecondary partnerships.
- Instructional staff and Student Advisors will provide instruction and individualized student support, including implementation and monitoring of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), assessment and monitoring of student progress, facilitation of online and hybrid learning, coordination of appropriate learning experiences, and intervention and enrichment as needed.
- Charter support staff and District support services will provide services necessary to support student learning and school operations. These services may include counseling, assessment, technology, business services, human resources, transportation, food service, and other District services as appropriate.
- The Parent & Community Advisory Group will provide input and recommendations regarding school programming, student needs, community partnerships, and continuous improvement. Community, tribal, workforce, and postsecondary partners will support approved cultural, career, experiential, and postsecondary learning opportunities aligned with student goals.

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.

Polson Connections Academy Staffing Chart and Organizational Structure Assuming 77 Students 2027-28, 112 Students 2031-32			
	FTE 2027-28	**FTE 2031-32**	**Notes**
PSD Board of Trustees	Existing Structure		
Superintendent			
Curriculum Director			
Charter Administrator/Director	0.5	1	Shared with PMS/PHS
Charter Teacher/Advisor	2	2.5	
Support Staff	2	3	
Counselor	0.1	0.2	Shared with PMS/PHS
Librarian	0.1	0.2	Shared with PMS/PHS
SPED Teacher	0.25	0.25	Shared with PMS/PHS
English	0.25	0.25	Shared with PMS/PHS
Math	0.25	0.25	Shared with PMS/PHS
Science	0.25	0.25	Shared with PMS/PHS

Social Studies	0.25	0.25	Shared with PMS/PHS
CTE	0.5	1.5	Shared with PMS/PHS
Health Enhancement	0.25	0.25	Shared with PMS/PHS
Total	**6.7**	**9.9**	

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

Timeline	Task	Person Responsible
October 2026	Complete charter application to Montana Board of Public Education; secure District Board approval and required supporting evidence; gather letters and other evidence of community support.	Charter Planning Team; Superintendent; Board of Trustees
January 2027	Upon BPE approval, begin charter-contract implementation and required OPI school-opening processes.	Superintendent; Charter Administrator/Director
February–April 2027	Finalize governance procedures, startup budget, facility plan, staffing plan, enrollment materials, lottery procedures, student handbook, assessment/accountability plan, and community/partner agreements.	Superintendent; Charter Administrator/Director; District support staff
Spring 2027	Recruit students and families; conduct information sessions; begin enrollment; hire or assign staff; finalize technology and instructional-provider agreements.	Superintendent; Charter Administrator/Director; District Human Resources; Instructional Staff
Summer 2027	Provide staff professional development; finalize the ILP process, schedules, student orientation, data systems, special-population service plans, transportation and food-service procedures, and facility setup.	Superintendent; Curriculum Director; Charter Administrator/Director; Charter Staff; District Support Services
August–September 2027	Conduct student and family orientation and open Polson Connections Charter for the 2027–28 school year.	Charter Administrator/Director; Charter Staff
Throughout Year 1	Monitor implementation; review enrollment, academic progress, attendance/engagement, budget, and operational needs; make adjustments as appropriate; provide required reports to the Board and BPE.	Charter Administrator/Director; Superintendent; Board of Trustees

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

Polson Connections Charter will use Polson School District #23's established hiring and staffing processes to recruit and assign qualified personnel. Initial staffing will include a Charter Administrator/Principal, Charter Teacher/Advisor, support staff, and shared District personnel from Polson Middle School and Polson High School, including counseling, library, special education, core academic, CTE, and health enhancement services. Staffing will expand as enrollment grows and student needs change.

The Charter Administrator/Principal and instructional staff will be recruited or assigned based on their ability to build strong relationships, support personalized and proficiency-based learning, facilitate flexible and technology-supported learning, use student data to monitor progress, and support culturally responsive, career-connected, and community-based learning. Staff serving as advisors will be prepared to support students in developing and monitoring Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) and in navigating individualized academic, cultural, career, and postsecondary opportunities.

Professional learning will follow Polson School District #23's professional development plan and established professional learning structures. Charter staff will participate in District professional development aligned to District priorities, including assessment and data use, literacy and mathematics, MTSS and intervention, differentiation, culturally responsive teaching, and other applicable areas. Additional professional learning will be provided as needed to support the charter's specific educational model, including personalized and proficiency-based learning, Individual Learning Plan (ILP) development and monitoring, online and hybrid learning, work-based learning, career and postsecondary advising, and the integration of cultural and community-based learning opportunities. Staff will also collaborate with District personnel and participate in relevant District professional learning communities and collaborative structures.

See Appendix C for Polson School District Professional Development Plan

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

Polson Connections Charter leadership and staff will be employees of Polson School District #23 and will be subject to applicable District employment policies, collective bargaining agreements, licensure requirements, and established evaluation procedures. Licensed teaching staff will be evaluated in accordance with the current Polson Education Association (PEA) Master Agreement, while the Charter Administrator and other personnel will be supervised and evaluated through the District's applicable administrative and personnel processes.

Teacher evaluations will follow the procedures established in the PEA Master Agreement, including classroom observations, formal evaluations, and opportunities for professional growth and improvement. The evaluation process will reflect District expectations for effective instruction and professional practice while recognizing the unique educational model of Polson Connections Charter.

Professional growth and feedback for charter staff will emphasize student engagement and achievement, effective use of assessment data, implementation of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), personalized and proficiency-based instruction, and collaboration with students, families, and community partners. Depending on staff responsibilities, additional areas of focus may include culturally responsive and

experiential learning, career and postsecondary readiness, work-based learning, and effective use of online instructional platforms. These priorities will help ensure that staff evaluation and professional development support the charter's mission of providing flexible, individualized pathways to student success.

See Appendix D: Polson Education Association Master Agreement (2025–2027), Article Six — Evaluation.

16. State the proposed governing bylaws.

The Polson Connections Charter will be governed by the Polson School District #23 Board of Trustees policies and procedures. All policies and procedures can be found in the Board Policy Manual: https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/PolicyListing.aspx?S=36031287

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

Partnerships will be a key component of Polson Connections Charter and will support both the Cultural Connections and Career & Community Connection pathways. The charter will build upon Polson School District's existing relationships with community, cultural, workforce, and postsecondary partners. Polson Connections Charter will partner with a variety of CSKT departments, including Tribal Education, as well as Lake County Job Service, Reach Higher Montana, Native Youth Community Partnerships (NYCP), Upward Bound, Salish Kootenai College, Flathead Valley Community College, Highlands College, Vocational Rehabilitation, St. Joseph Medical Center, Polson Health & Rehabilitation, local businesses and employers, cultural organizations, and other regional partners. These relationships will provide opportunities for mentoring, career exploration, job shadows, internships, work-based learning, cultural learning, postsecondary planning, and authentic application of academic skills.

The charter's individualized structure and flexible scheduling will allow students to participate in these opportunities as part of their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) while continuing to make progress toward graduation requirements. As appropriate, the charter will establish or expand partnerships and contractual agreements to provide internships, apprenticeships, college coursework, certifications, cultural and community-based learning, and other student-specific opportunities.

The charter will also utilize state approved online education providers currently available through Polson School District, including but not limited to Edmentum, Montana Digital Academy, and BYU Online, when online coursework is appropriate to a student's ILP. Students will not be limited to a single provider and may combine online coursework with in-person instruction, accredited college coursework, and other approved learning experiences.

18. Provide the proposed calendar and sample daily schedule.

Polson Connections Charter will generally follow the Polson School District calendar. The charter will provide flexible scheduling options so that students can participate in learning experiences that align with their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), interests, needs, and postsecondary goals. When appropriate and available, students may also participate in summer learning opportunities as part of their ILP to support academic progress, pursue additional coursework, accelerate learning, or create greater flexibility during the regular school year.

Polson Connections Charter will have three general scheduling options. Each student in Polson Connections Charter will have a schedule that is individualized to fit their unique needs, interests, and goals.

1. **In-Person Schedule:** Students who benefit from greater structure and regular in-person instruction may complete most of their learning in the charter's designated spaces at Polson Middle School or Polson High School, including access to appropriate courses and instruction provided by school staff, while still allowing flexibility in pacing and scheduling.
2. **Remote Schedule:** Students may complete most of their coursework through approved online providers while maintaining regular connection with their advisor and participating in Cultural Connections or Career & Community Connection experiences aligned with their ILP. Attendance will be taken in accordance with district and state policies.
3. **Hybrid Schedule:** Students may combine in-person and remote learning with CTE, dual enrollment, project-based learning, internships, work-based learning, cultural experiences, or other community and postsecondary opportunities.

Polson Connections Charter 6-8	
Traditional Bell Schedule	
Advisory	8:10-8:35
Period 1	8:38-9:26
Period 2	9:29-10:17
Period 3	10:20-11:08
Period 4	11:11-11:59
Lunch	11:59-12:47
Period 5	12:50-1:38
Period 6	1:41-2:29
Period 7	2:32-3:20

Polson Connections Charter 9-12		
Traditional Bell Schedule		
Regular Bell Schedule	**Period**	**ILP Advisory Day Schedule**
7:00-7:45	Early Bird	7:00-7:45
8:10-9:00	Period 1	8:10-9:00
9:05-9:55	Period 2	9:05-9:55
10:00-10:50	Period 3	10:00-10:50
10:55-11:55	Period 4	10:55-11:45

--	Advisory (Determined by ILP)	11:50-12:10
11:55-12:40	Lunch	12:10-12:40
12:40-1:30	Period 5	12:40-1:30
1:35-2:25	Period 6	1:35-2:25
2:30-3:20	Period 7	2:30-3:20

See Appendix E for Proposed PSD Calendar for 2027-28

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

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

Transportation for resident students will be provided through Polson School District #23 transportation services in accordance with applicable state requirements and District policies. Food services and meals will be provided through the Polson School District food-service program in accordance with applicable state and federal requirements. All other operational and ancillary services (i.e., maintenance, custodial services, technology, and financial services) will be provided under the umbrella of Polson School District operations and personnel, as appropriate.

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

Polson Connection Charter students may participate in cocurricular and extracurricular opportunities offered through Polson Middle School and Polson High School, consistent with applicable District policy, MHSA rules, and eligibility requirements.

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

Polson Connections Charter will operate as a school within Polson School District #23. School finances are governed by the Polson School District Business Office, which follows Montana law regarding procedures, financial controls, audit procedures, and safeguards. The charter administrator will develop and monitor the school budget in collaboration with the Superintendent and business office. Expenditures will require appropriate authorization and will be recorded within district accounting systems to allow transparent monitoring of charter revenues and costs.

22. Describe the insurance coverage that will be obtained.

Insurance for Polson Connections Charter will be included within Polson School District #23's existing insurance.

See Appendix F for Polson School District Insurance Description

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

The five-year budget should be based on conservative enrollment/ANB assumptions and clearly identify anticipated state/local revenue, staffing costs, state approved online provider licensing and implementation (i.e., Edmentum, MT Digital Academy, etc.), technology/devices, facility costs, transportation/food service impacts, professional development, supplies, experiential-learning costs, and shared district services. The narrative should explain which existing district resources reduce new startup costs and how staffing will scale with enrollment.

EXPENSES	**FY 27-28**	**FY 28-29**	**FY 29-30**	**FY 30-31**	**FY 31-32**
SALARIES / BENEFITS	$ 907,223	$ 962,389	$ 1,033,226	$ 1,114,875	$ 1,212,411
TECH	$ 53,072	$ 54,133	$ 55,216	$ 56,320	$ 57,447
TRANSPORTATION	$ 86,315	$ 88,041	$ 89,802	$ 91,598	$ 93,430
CURRICULUM	$ 50,000	$ 52,500	$ 55,125	$ 57,881	$ 60,775
SUPPLIES	$ 25,000	$ 25,500	$ 26,010	$ 26,530	$ 27,061
FACILITIES / FS	$ 30,000	$ 30,600	$ 31,212	$ 31,836	$ 32,473
TOTAL EXP BUDGET	$ 1,151,610	$ 1,213,164	$ 1,290,591	$ 1,379,041	$ 1,483,597
MS ESTIMATED REVENUE	**FY 27-28**	**FY 28-29**	**FY 29-30**	**FY 30-31**	**FY 31-32**
EST ANB	22	22	24	25	27
ANB ALLOCATION	$ 6,887	$ 7,063	$ 7,063	$ 7,063	$ 7,063
ANB EST	$ 151,514	$ 155,386	$ 169,512	$ 176,575	$ 190,701
BASE ENTITLEMENT	$ 128,776	$ 132,060	$ 132,060	$ 132,060	$ 132,060
	$ 280,290	$ 287,446	$ 301,572	$ 308,635	$ 322,761
HS ESTIMATED REVENUE	**FY 27-28**	**FY 28-29**	**FY 29-30**	**FY 30-31**	**FY 31-32**
EST ANB	55	59	66	75	85
ANB ALLOCATION	$ 8,818	$ 9,043	$ 9,043.00	$ 9,043.00	$ 9,043.00
ANB EST	$ 484,990	$ 533,537	$ 596,838.00	$ 678,225.00	$ 768,655.00
BASE ENTITLEMENT	$ 386,330	$ 392,181	$ 392,181	$ 392,181	$ 392,181
	$ 871,320	$ 925,718	$ 989,019	$ 1,070,406	$ 1,160,836
TOTAL MS/HS EST. REVENUE	$ 1,151,610	$ 1,213,164	$ 1,290,591	$ 1,379,041	$ 1,483,597

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

Polson Connections Charter's startup and first-year cash-flow projections will align with the District's fiscal year, the school's opening timeline, and the first-year operating budget of $1,151,610. The projections will use conservative enrollment and ANB assumptions consistent with the five-year budget. Revenue estimates will reflect anticipated state and local funding and the timing of actual receipts. Grants, donations, and fundraising will not be assumed as sources of funding for core operations.

Startup expenditures will occur primarily during the months preceding the school's opening. These expenditures will include state approved online provider licensing and implementation (i.e., Edmentum,

MT Digital Academy, etc.), technology and device purchases, instructional materials, staff preparation and professional development, and any necessary facility setup. The District will use existing facilities, technology infrastructure, administrative systems, and shared services wherever practical to reduce upfront costs. Startup costs will be separately identified to distinguish one-time purchases from recurring operating expenses and avoid double counting expenses included in the first-year budget.

The monthly cash-flow schedule will reflect the following expenditure assumptions:

- **Salaries and benefits—$907,223:** Payments will follow employee contracts, payroll schedules, and benefit-payment requirements. Any compensation for work completed before opening will be identified in the startup period.
- **Technology—$53,072:** Device purchases and initial setup costs will be concentrated before opening, with ongoing support, subscriptions, and replacement costs scheduled throughout the year.
- **Transportation—$86,315:** Payments will follow the operating calendar and anticipated service needs, including transportation for experiential learning.
- **Curriculum—$50,000:** Online provider licensing (i.e., Edmentum, MT Digital Academy, etc.) and other curriculum expenses will be scheduled according to vendor agreements, including any annual payments required before students begin instruction.
- **Supplies—$25,000:** Initial purchases will occur before opening, followed by replenishment throughout the school year.
- **Facilities and food service—$30,000:** Payments will reflect necessary setup, ongoing facility expenses, and anticipated food-service impacts.

Professional development, experiential-learning expenses, and shared district services will be identified within the applicable budget categories and assigned to the months in which payment is expected.

The business office will prepare a month-by-month schedule showing beginning cash, anticipated receipts by source, expenditures by category, and ending cash. The schedule will cover the pre-opening startup period and the full first fiscal year. State and local revenue will be entered according to expected receipt dates rather than distributed evenly across twelve months. Expenditures will likewise reflect actual payment obligations rather than monthly averages.

Because licensing, equipment purchases, and staff preparation may occur before associated revenue is received, the projections will identify the maximum anticipated cash shortfall and the resources needed to cover it. The District's proposed approach is to manage these timing differences through available, legally permissible district cash resources, subject to business-office verification and any required approvals. The final schedule will identify the specific funding source and amount available for this purpose. Purchases will be phased when practical to preserve adequate cash for payroll and essential operations.

The business office will review actual enrollment, revenue receipts, expenditures, and cash balances monthly during the first year. Staffing and discretionary purchases will be adjusted to enrollment and available funding while maintaining the core educational program. Before startup commitments are finalized, the District will verify that sufficient cash is available to meet obligations through the opening period and first year of operation.

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

The Polson Connections Charter core educational program will not depend on fundraising contributions. The District may pursue grants, donations, and community partnerships to enhance career

experiences, cultural programming, equipment, student credentials, transportation associated with experiential learning, and other enrichment opportunities. Any contributions will be accepted and administered in accordance with District policy.

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

Polson Connections Charter will utilize classrooms, conference rooms, and breakout spaces at Polson Middle School and Polson High School. The District's recent construction and renovation work has expanded instructional capacity at both schools. At this time, there is no need for additional facilities for Polson Connections Charter to operate without overcrowding. If designated charter spaces become temporarily unavailable, the District will identify alternate space or use appropriate remote or hybrid learning arrangements to maintain educational services.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEED

27. Describe the specific evidence of significant community support.

The Polson Connections Charter proposal has grown from needs and priorities identified through district strategic planning, alternative education programming, literacy and MTSS initiatives, CTE needs assessments, and ongoing engagement with students, families, and community partners. Polson School District serves a diverse rural community on the Flathead Indian Reservation, where students bring a wide range of strengths, interests, cultural backgrounds, and individual circumstances to their educational experiences. District data and planning efforts have identified persistent challenges related to academic achievement, poverty, student mobility, disability, homelessness, and student engagement, reinforcing the need for flexible, personalized pathways to graduation and postsecondary success.

Feedback from students, families, and community stakeholders has further reinforced the need for more individualized educational options. Through exit interviews with families leaving the district, we have heard a desire for greater flexibility in scheduling, pacing, and instructional delivery to better accommodate students' unique needs and circumstances. Our annual Tribal Consultation events and presentations to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council have also provided valuable opportunities to hear directly from tribal leaders, students, families, and community members about educational priorities, student engagement, culturally responsive learning, and the importance of strengthening connections between schools, families, and community. These ongoing conversations have helped shape our vision for a charter school that provides multiple pathways for students to experience academic success while remaining connected to their culture, community, and future goals.

Community investment in expanded career preparation is already evident. Voters approved bond improvements that significantly expanded and modernized CTE learning spaces, including facilities for welding, engineering, CAD, and other career-connected programs. The district has established relationships with numerous local businesses through School-to-Work and work-based learning opportunities, collaborates with postsecondary institutions including Salish Kootenai College, Flathead Valley Community College, and Montana Tech for dual enrollment, and works with partners such as Lake County Job Service, Reach Higher Montana, Vocational Rehabilitation, and local employers to connect education with regional workforce needs. These partnerships provide a strong foundation for the Career Connections pathway, where flexible online academics will allow students to pursue meaningful career experiences while continuing to make progress toward graduation.

The district's existing Indigenous Immersion program also provides a strong foundation for the Cultural Connections pathway. Developed through collaboration with CSKT Tribal Education and support from the Project AWARE grant, the program has demonstrated the value of culturally grounded, experiential learning that connects students with tribal knowledge keepers, cultural traditions, community, and place. Building upon these established relationships and experiences, the charter will expand opportunities for students to strengthen their cultural identity, sense of belonging, resilience, and engagement in school.

Together, the district's existing programs, community partnerships, and ongoing stakeholder feedback demonstrate both the need for and the foundation to support Polson Connections Charter. Rather than creating an entirely new approach, the charter will bring together and expand successful practices already underway, responding directly to the needs expressed by students, families, and community partners while providing greater flexibility, meaningful connections, and individualized opportunities for student success.

See Appendix B for Letters of Support & Partnerships

28. Describe the opportunities and expectations for parent/guardian involvement.

Families will be active partners in each student's educational plan. Before enrollment, students and families will participate in an orientation to the charter's expectations, flexible learning model, Individual Learning Plan (ILP) process, and available learning opportunities. Families will participate in the development and regular review of the student's ILP and will receive regular communication regarding academic progress, engagement, goals, and areas where additional support may be needed.

Parent/guardian involvement may include ILP and parent/teacher conferences, family information sessions, career and postsecondary planning, participation in the Parent & Community Advisory Group, and communication with staff regarding student needs or changes in circumstances. Families will also have opportunities to provide feedback through surveys and other school improvement activities. The charter will provide multiple methods of communication and work to reduce barriers to meaningful family participation.

The charter recognizes that students in grades 6–12 are developing increasing independence and ownership of their education. Family partnership will therefore be balanced with intentional development of student ownership, self-advocacy, goal setting, decision-making, and responsibility for progress toward academic, career, cultural, and postsecondary goals.

APPENDIX

- Appendix A: School Board Approval (10.2 TOPIC: Consideration of the Polson Connections Academy Charter School Application, p. 4)
- Appendix B: Evidence of Community Support & Partnerships
- Appendix C: Professional Development Plan
- Appendix D: Polson Professional Advancement System
- Appendix E: Proposed PSD Calendar for 2027-28
- Appendix F: Polson School District Insurance Description
- Appendix G: Integrated Strategic Action Plan with Graduate Profile

Appendix B: Letters of Support & Partnerships

THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES
OF THE FLATHEAD NATION
P.O. BOX 278
Pablo, Montana 59855
(406) 275-2700
FAX (406) 275-2806
www.cskt.org

A Confederation of the Salish,
Pend d' Oreille
and Kootenai Tribes

A People of Vision

TRIBAL COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Mike Dolson - Chairman
Jami Pluff - Vice Chair
Danielle Matt - Secretary
Carole Lankford - Treasurer
Len TwoTeeth
Danielle Matt
James "Bing" Matt
Tom McDonald
Jame Steele, Jr.

October 22, 2026

Montana Board of Public Education
RE: Letter of Support for Polson Connections Charter

Dear Members of the Board of Public Education,
On behalf of Tribal Education, I am pleased to express our support for Polson School District #23's application to establish the Polson Connections Charter.

We recognize the importance of culturally responsive education that honors Indigenous identity, strengthens students' connections to their heritage, and creates meaningful opportunities for students to succeed academically while remaining connected to their community and culture. Polson School District's Indigenous Immersion Program and its commitment to cultural connections play an important role in supporting students' sense of belonging, identity, and pride in their Indigenous heritage.

We are particularly encouraged by the potential of Polson Connections Charter to expand opportunities for personalized, flexible learning that recognizes the strengths, experiences, and individual needs of students. Through meaningful connections with Tribal Education, cultural resources, community members, and Indigenous knowledge holders, students can engage in learning that reflects their cultural identity while building the academic skills and confidence needed for future success.

We believe that strengthening the relationship between education, culture, and community is essential to supporting Indigenous students. Creating flexible learning pathways that value cultural knowledge, encourage community engagement, and recognize the importance of Indigenous perspectives can help students see the relevance of their education and envision a future that honors both their heritage and their aspirations. Tribal Education supports Polson School District #23's efforts to expand educational opportunities through Polson Connections Charter and encourages the continued integration of Indigenous perspectives, cultural learning, and community partnerships into students' educational experiences. We look forward to opportunities for continued collaboration in support of students, families, and our community.
Sincerely,

Michelle Mitchell
Michelle Mitchell
Acting Director of Member Services
Tribal Education Director
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

October 26, 2026

Montana Board of Public Education

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Public Education:

I am pleased to offer my support for Polson School District #23's application to establish the Polson Connections Charter. In my role as President of the St. Joseph Medical Center Advisory Council, I appreciate educational opportunities that help young people understand health care careers and the needs of the community they call home.

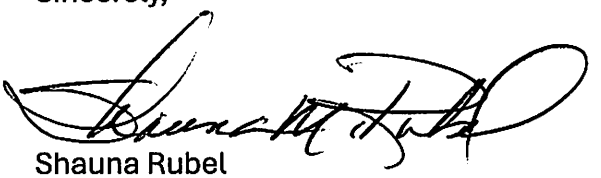
The proposed charter would serve grades 6 through 12 and connect personalized academics with career exploration and community experiences. Health care offers students a wide range of career possibilities, including clinical care, administration, technology, and other essential support roles. Early exposure can help students understand these options and the education and skills they require.

I see value in exploring connections between charter staff and medical center leadership around career presentations, conversations with health care professionals, and other appropriate learning experiences. Middle school students could gain an introduction to health care careers, while high school students could explore their interests more deeply and identify relevant coursework and post-secondary pathways.

Community health also offers meaningful connections to service learning. Students could explore how access to food, reliable transportation, and other community resources affect well-being, then connect that learning with appropriate service projects. Any activities involving the medical center would require coordination with its leadership and consideration of student age, supervision, patient privacy, and operational needs.

I support the charter's goal of helping students see the relevance of their education and build relationships that inform their futures. I encourage approval of the Polson Connections Charter. This letter expresses my support for the proposal; specific medical center partnerships would be considered through the appropriate organizational process.

Sincerely,



Shauna Rubel
President
St. Joseph Medical Center Advisory Council

Polson Chamber of Commerce

Carol Lynn Lapotka
President | Board of Directors

October 26, 2026

Montana Board of Public Education

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Public Education:

I am pleased to support Polson School District #23's application to establish the Polson Connections Charter. As President of the Polson Chamber of Commerce, I value opportunities that strengthen connections among our schools, local businesses, and the community.

The proposed school would serve students in grades 6 through 12 through personalized academics connected to career interests, culture, and community experiences. Its Career & Community Connections pathway could help students develop an understanding of local employment opportunities while building the communication, responsibility, and problem solving skills that employers value.

I see potential for collaboration between the charter and the Chamber through business introductions, career conversations, mentorship, and community projects. Middle school students could begin exploring the roles businesses and organizations play in Polson, while high school students could pursue more focused experiences aligned with their interests and goals.

The Chamber's Junior Ambassador program presents a particularly meaningful opportunity to explore service and leadership connections. Participation in community events and service projects could help students practice professional communication, take responsibility, and build relationships with community members. Any collaboration would be developed together to align with the program's participation expectations and available opportunities.

Connecting students with meaningful roles in their community can strengthen their sense of belonging and help them envision a future in Polson. I support approval of the Polson Connections Charter and welcome continued conversations about how the Chamber and the school can work together.

Sincerely,

Carol Lynn Lapotka
President
Polson Chamber of Commerce

POLSON
LOAVES + FISH
PANTRY

904 First Street East
Polson, Montana 59860
(406)-883-6864

October 26th, 2026

Montana Board of Public Education

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Public Education:

I am pleased to support Polson School District #23's application to establish the Polson Connections Charter. As Director of Polson Loaves and Fish Food Pantry in Polson, I see meaningful opportunities to connect students' education with service that responds to needs in our community.

The proposed charter would serve students in grades 6 through 12 through flexible, personalized learning connected to careers, culture, and community. Its emphasis on community experiences could help students understand local needs while developing a sense of responsibility and belonging.

I am interested in exploring a service partnership that includes both middle school and high school students. Depending on pantry needs and student readiness, potential activities could include organizing food drives, sorting donations, preparing food boxes, or supporting other appropriate pantry projects. Specific activities, schedules, and supervision would be developed collaboratively so that student participation contributes meaningfully to the pantry's work.

These experiences could connect academic learning with practical tasks. Students might apply mathematics to inventory and quantities, develop communication skills through a food drive, or learn about nutrition and the factors that affect food access. Reflection would help students understand the purpose of their service, respect the dignity and privacy of those receiving assistance, and recognize their ability to contribute.

A sustained partnership could allow students to take on greater responsibility as they progress from middle school through high school. I support the approval of the Polson Connections Charter and welcome the opportunity to discuss how Polson Loaves and Fish can help students learn through service while supporting our community.

Sincerely,

Heather Fors

Heather Fors
Director
Polson Loaves and Fish Pantry
406-883-6864

Appendix D: Polson Education Association Master Agreement (2025-2027) - Article Six: Evaluation

Employee Evaluation Procedures

Polson Connections Charter
Polson School District #23

Polson Connections Charter will utilize the established employee evaluation procedures of Polson School District #23. Licensed teaching staff will be evaluated in accordance with Article Six: Evaluation of the 2025–2027 Polson Education Association (PEA) Master Agreement. Charter administrators and other personnel will be evaluated through the District's applicable administrative and personnel evaluation procedures.

The District's evaluation processes will provide accountability for professional performance while supporting the charter's emphasis on personalized instruction, academic growth, student engagement, and meaningful connections to culture, community, and career.

The following provisions are reproduced from Article Six of the 2025–2027 PEA Master Agreement.

ARTICLE SIX: EVALUATION

6.1 Evaluation Form

Evaluations will be reduced to writing on the EPAS forms. Completed evaluation forms will be placed in the teacher's personnel file after the teacher and evaluator have met to discuss the evaluation and the teacher has signed the evaluation form.

6.2 Monitoring and Observation

All monitoring or observation of the work performance of a Teacher shall be conducted openly and with full knowledge of the Teacher. The Exclusive Representative recognizes that casual observation on the part of the evaluator is a part of the overall evaluation of a Teacher.

6.3 Evaluation Schedule

Non-tenured teachers shall receive two formal evaluations annually, both mid-year and end of year. Tenured teachers shall be evaluated end of year once every third year. Mid-year evaluations will occur on or before January 29. The end of year evaluation will be on or before May 15. In the event that these dates fall on a non-workday the preceding workday shall be the deadline. In the event that an evaluation deadline is missed for a substantive reason, the deadline may be extended for up to ten (10) working days. Within five (5) days of a formal observation the evaluator will complete and return the evaluation form to the teacher and schedule a follow up conference. Should the teacher disagree with the contents of an

evaluation they may write an official statement, within ten (10) days of the follow up conference, that will be attached to the evaluation form.

6.4 Right to Union Representation

Any teacher may have a representative present during any part of the observation/follow up conferences.