

Helena Public Schools Notice of Educational Opportunities

The Board of Trustees of the Helena School District provides the following description of its educational opportunities available in the District's schools:

Admission to School

The District will enroll a child in school who has reached the age of 5 on or before September 10th of the given school year pursuant to MCA § 20-5-101 and Board Policy 3110. You have the option to enroll your child in a half-time kindergarten program pursuant to MCA § 20-7-117.

Helena Public Schools offers KinderSprouts, a free, full-day early-learning program for qualifying four-year-old children. The program is designed to strengthen early literacy, early numeracy, language, social-emotional development, and other skills that support a successful transition to kindergarten.

To be considered for the 2026–27 KinderSprouts program, a child must be four years old on or before September 10, 2026, and is not entering or has not completed kindergarten. Participation in a developmental and academic-readiness screening is required. Screening information is used to determine whether the child would benefit from early-literacy or early-numeracy intervention. Screening dates for the next school year will be announced through district communications late Fall.

The District offers a summer JumpStart program for children who are five years of age on or before September 10 and have not yet completed third grade. The summer program is a minimum of four weeks and requires 120 hours of instruction. The program is intended to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills in a fun and relaxed setting.

Resident students who have reached the age of 5 or not yet reached the age of 19 on or before September 10th of the given school year who are enrolled in a nonpublic or home school may seek part-time enrollment in the District.

The District shall assign and admit a resident student enrolled in a nonpublic or home school who meets the age requirements established by Montana law as a part-time enrollee at the request of the child's parent or guardian pursuant to Board Policy 3150.

Identification and Evaluation of Children with Disabilities and Special Education

The District has developed policies and procedures regarding the location, identification and evaluation of students with disabilities beginning at age three pursuant to federal and state law (20 USC § 1401 et seq. and MCA § 20-7-411) pursuant to Board Policy 2161. The District will provide annual public notice of its Child Find Activities. The District develops, implements, reviews and revises Individualized Education Programs (IEP) in accordance with the requirements of federal and state law.

Proficiency-based and Personalized Learning

The Helena Public School District seeks to create personalized learning opportunities permitted by Montana law, including but not limited to work-based learning, proficiency-based learning, offsite instruction, and transformational learning, to fulfill the people's goal of developing the full educational potential of each person.

[See Board Policy: 2423 Personalized Learning](#)

The Board of Trustees or Superintendent may grant graduation requirement waivers based on individual student needs, hardships, aspirations, and performance levels.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Participation in extracurricular activities is addressed through the Student Handbook, which is provided to each student and is available on the [district's website](#). The Student Handbook identifies the extracurricular activities offered by the District.

A student attending a nonpublic school or home school that meets the requirements under MCA §§ 20-5-109 and 20-5-112 may participate in extracurricular activities offered the District subject to the student's eligibility as stated in each school's student handbook and the District's Student Activity Handbook. The student's academic eligibility must be verified by the head administrator of the nonpublic school or educator providing the student instruction in the home school as verified by the principal.

Access to Remote Instruction

The District offers the following access to remote instruction

- **Montana Digital Academy** - Freshmen, Sophomore and Junior students enrolled at Helena High School or Capital High School may also enroll in the **Montana Digital Academy (MTDA)** for one credit (year-long course) per year. Seniors enrolled at Helena High School or Capital High School may enroll in the Montana Digital Academy for up to two credits (two year- long courses) during their Senior year.
- **Mount Ascension Academy Charter School** – Mount Ascension Charter School is a free online learning option offered through the Helena Public Schools. Mount Ascension provides students in grades 9-12 the opportunity to meet their educational needs through classes online full-time, part-time or in a blended environment.

An out-of-district student may participate in remote instruction as long as the student is physically attending a school or offsite instructional setting within the district and is enrolled under an out-of-district agreement. An out-of-district student may participate in a remote

instruction course in any other school district if the student's resident district does not offer an equivalent course. A course is not "equivalent" if the course does not provide the same level of advantage on successful completion, including but not limited to dual credit, advanced placement, and career certification.

Out of District Attendance

The District enrolls all nonresident students required to be enrolled where there are extenuating circumstances pursuant to MCA § 20-5-321. The District enrolls all other nonresident students at the request of a parent/guardian where there are no extenuating circumstances pursuant to MCA § 20-5-320 and [Board Policy 3141 - Nonresident Student Enrollment](#). Enrollment is on an annual basis, and enrollment for one school year is not guaranteed for subsequent years.

Career and Technical Education

The District offers a variety of career and technical education courses. Students should check with their counselor regarding currently industry-recognized credentials and any work-based learning opportunities.

Early College, Dual Enrollment, and Post Secondary Opportunities

College & University Course Guidelines

Helena Public Schools offers juniors and seniors the opportunity to undertake additional academic challenges and participate in courses not offered at the high school level. The counselors' and Principal's approval must be secured before a student may submit an application to a college or university participating in this program.

Dual Credit

Dual credit allows high schools students to simultaneously earn credit toward both a high school diploma and college coursework that can lead to a post-secondary degree or certificate, or toward transfer to another college. The primary purpose of offering dual credit courses is to deliver high quality, introductory, college level courses to high-performing high school students.

The Helena Public Schools have dual credit partnerships with a number of Montana colleges and universities. Students interested in dual credit opportunities must meet with their building administration to determine available options.

Students should be aware of Montana High School Association on-campus attendance eligibility requirements for activity participation.

Montana University System - One-Two-Free

The Montana University System utilizes the "One-Two-Free" program which enables students to enroll in their first two courses, up to six credits, at **NO COST**. After a student has maximized the two courses (six credits) then students follow the dual enrollment formula and can enroll in college courses at a reduced rate (50% of the current resident tuition).

Carroll College Advanced College Experience (ACE) Program

The Carroll College ACE Program lets motivated high school students take real college courses before graduating. The program is open to local high school juniors and seniors with a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher. Students must have approval from a parent or guardian and a high school counselor. Students can take up to two 100-level courses (maximum 8 credits) or applicable 200-level courses with open seats.

Advanced Placement and Honors Courses

Both Helena High and Capital High offer “Honors Courses” for students seeking more challenging coursework and “Advanced Placement” (AP) in English, mathematics, science and world languages. Both high schools received recognition on the 2024 AP School Honor Roll for expanding access to college-level coursework.

Other Opportunities

Mount Ascension Academy Charter School

Mount Ascension Charter School offers a combination of online (at home) and in-person learning experiences at a designated school site designed to meet students’ individual needs in grades 6-12. If you are interested in online courses or hybrid attendance at our middle school or high school, please complete the [preliminary registration request form here](#). After this form is submitted, you will be contacted by a Mount Ascension Academy staff member!

For additional information about Mount Ascension Charter School, please click [HERE](#) or contact Julie TeNyenhuis at jtenyenhuis@helenaschools.org or (406) 324-2204.

Out of District: If you live outside of the Helena Public Schools district boundaries, please fill out the required out-of-district paperwork at this link: [out-of-district enrollment form](#).

Transcript Order: Get a transcript ordered and delivered to the colleges you choose in the format they prefer – go to <https://www.parchment.com/u/registration/93056191/institution>.

Explore School: If you are interested in grades 1 to 8 at **Explore School**, your next step is to contact Dr. Kaitlyn Hess, Federal, State and Special Programs Director at khess1@helenaschools.org.

Montessori Charter School

The district has transitioned its long-standing Montessori program to a charter school. Montessori has been a popular option for Helena families since the program was established in our district 45 years ago. Montessori offers students the opportunity to learn independently and explore within a structured environment to build independence and executive functioning skills.

Due to the popularity of Montessori, students are admitted via a lottery. Learn more at <https://helenaschools.org/departments/montessori/>

For additional information about the Montessori Charter School, please contact Sarah Simpson at ssimpson@helenaschools.org.

Project for Alternative Learning Charter School

PAL High School Charter information can be found at <https://pal.helenaschools.org/>

For additional information about the PAL Charter School, please contact Matt Carey at mcarey1@helenaschools.org or (406) 324-1632.

STARBASE Helena Program

STARBASE Helena is a free Department of Defense youth program that teaches science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) to local students.

- **Where it is:** Located at [Fort William Henry Harrison](#) just west of Helena, established in 2007.
- **Who runs it:** Administered by the [Montana Department of Military Affairs](#) in collaboration with the Helena Public Schools.
- **Core mission:** Provides hands-on activities like robotics, 3D printing, coding, and rocketry for young people
- **5th Grade Program:** Serves fifth-grade classes from Helena and surrounding school districts for immersive, multi-day instruction.
- **STARBASE Advanced (2.0):** Offers after-school STEAM and coding clubs for middle school students at C.R. Anderson Middle School and Helena Middle School.
- **Summer Camps:** Hosts specialized day camps, including sessions for military dependents and tribal youth.

ExploreSchool at ExplorationWorks

The ExploreSchool program at ExplorationWorks is an educational partnership with the Helena Public Schools and the children's science museum in the Great Northern Towne Center. It provides weekly science education for home-school students in grades 1-8. The program delivers rich, hands-on, inquiry-based science, technology, engineering and math learning experiences.

School Aged Child Care (SACC)

The program provides licensed before and after-school childcare for students in grades K-5. It emphasizes children's social, emotional, physical and intellectual development in a safe and caring environment. The program provides developmentally appropriate educational activities such as games and physical recreation, arts and crafts, storytelling and reading, music, time to complete homework and free-choice activities to pursue individual interests. Registration information and fees can be found on the district's website. The program can accept Best Beginnings scholarships. [For more information.](#)

PEAK Program

The Helena Public Schools PEAK Program provides a continuum of comprehensive services for identified gifted and talented (GT) students in grades PreK–12 with direct service programming beginning in grade 3. Rooted in research-based practices, the program is designed to meet the unique academic and social-emotional needs of high-ability learners through enrichment, acceleration, and specialized instruction.