

Home educating your Middle Grade age child

In Montana the parent is solely responsible for the instruction, selection of curriculum and testing as per 20-5-111 MCA (aka state law):

20-5-111. Responsibilities and rights of parent who provides home school. Subject to the provisions of 20-5-109 , a parent has the authority to instruct the parent's child, stepchild, or ward in a home school and is solely responsible for:

- (1) the educational philosophy of the home school;
- (2) the selection of instructional materials, curriculum, and textbooks;
- (3) the time, place, and method of instruction; and
- (4) the evaluation of the home school instruction.

Also, you are required to instruct the same hours as public schools:

20-1-301. School fiscal year. (1) The school fiscal year begins on July 1 and ends on June 30. At least the minimum aggregate hours defined in subsection (2) must be conducted during each school fiscal year, except that 1050 aggregate hours of pupil instruction for graduating seniors may be sufficient.

- (2) The minimum aggregate hours required by grade are:
- (a) 360 hours for a half-time kindergarten program or 720 hours for a full-time kindergarten program, as provided in 20-7-117;
 - (b) 720 hours for grades 1 through 3; and
 - (c) 1,080 hours for grades 4 through 12.

All home educating families with children ages 7-16, must follow 20-5-109 MCA to be exempt from compulsory attendance [in public school]:

20-5-109. Nonpublic school requirements for compulsory enrollment exemption.

To qualify its students for exemption from compulsory enrollment under 20-5-102 , a nonpublic or home school:

- (1) shall maintain records on pupil attendance and disease immunization and make the records available to the county superintendent of schools on request;
- (2) shall provide at least the minimum aggregate hours of pupil instruction in accordance with 20-1-301 and 20-1-302 ;
- (3) must be housed in a building that complies with applicable local health and safety regulations;
- (4) shall provide an organized course of study that includes instruction in the subjects required of public schools as a basic instructional program pursuant to 20-7-111 ; and
- (5) in the case of home schools, shall notify the county superintendent of schools, of the county in which the home school is located, in each school fiscal year of the student's attendance at the school.

The 'basic instructional program' as per (4) (above) is defined in OPI's Administrative Rules:

10.55.902 BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM: MIDDLE GRADES

(1) A school with middle grades must have an education program aligned to the program area standards that enables all students to meet the content standards and content-specific grade-level learning progressions.

(2) The Board of Public Education, upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, may approve a 7 and 8 grade program that must follow either the middle school philosophy and components described in (3) or the departmentalized philosophy and components described in (4).

(3) The Board of Public Education, upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, may approve a middle school program that:

(a) addresses the unique nature of middle-grade children by focusing on their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. To put such philosophy into practice, a middle school must have flexibility to:

(i) approach instruction, scheduling, and teaching in a variety of ways;

(ii) undertake interdisciplinary work; and

(iii) plan blocks of coursework deriving from the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs of middle school students.

(b) incorporates critical and creative thinking, career awareness, lifelong learning, and safety;

(c) incorporates instruction in reading literacy and writing literacy into all required and elective program areas as required in the Montana Common Core Standards, ARM Title 10, chapter 53;

(d) includes, at a minimum, the following program areas, required of all students yearly:

(i) English language arts;

(ii) mathematics;

(iii) physical and life sciences;

(iv) social studies; and

(v) health enhancement.

(e) at a minimum maintains the following required program areas:

(i) visual arts including, but not limited to art history, art criticism, aesthetic perception, and production;

(ii) music including, but not limited to general, instrumental, and vocal (emphasizing comprehensive music elements, music history, criticism, aesthetic perception, and musical production);

(iii) career and technical education courses or pathways such as agriculture, business education, family and consumer sciences, health occupations and industrial technology education; and

(iv) world languages.

(f) offers as electives to all students exploratory courses such as creative writing, dance, drama, financial education, photography, and leadership.

(4) A junior high (grades 7-9) or 7-8 school must offer an educational program, aligned to the program area standards, that enables all students to meet the content standards and content-specific grade-level progressions.

(a) Instruction in reading literacy and writing literacy shall be incorporated into all required and elective program areas as required in the Montana Common Core Standards, ARM Title 10, chapter 53.

(b) All students shall complete the following program areas each year:

(i) English language arts--1 unit;

(ii) social studies--1 unit;

(iii) mathematics--1 unit;

(iv) science--1 unit; and

(v) health enhancement--1/2 unit.

(c) All students must be allowed to elect from the following program area offerings:

(i) visual arts--1/2 unit;

(ii) music--1/2 unit;

(iii) career and technical education--1/2 unit; and

(iv) world languages and cultures--1/2 unit.

(d) A unit is defined as the equivalent of at least 8100 minutes for one school year.

(e) Time to pass between classes may be counted toward the standard school day but shall not be counted toward class time.

The primary question of 'what the child needs to learn' is answered in 10.55.902 'ARM' rules above. It is not state law, but rules developed by OPI based upon the education level of the school. The above ARM rule is for public AND nonpublic AND home schools.

You should also contact a support group leader in your area (if available) for some direction and maybe link up with other families who have students the same age as your child. (Visit SUPPORT GROUPS page)

There are many instructional programs available that are listed on the LINKS page. Here is an excellent website that provides some great reviews of available resources:

<https://cathyduffyreviews.com>

If you decide to proceed with home schooling your child, you must notify the ELECTED County Superintendent (of your county) at the beginning of each new school year. You should also maintain an attendance record that may be requested by the County Superintendent.