

Mr. Tristen Loveridge and Committee:

I am writing to voice my concerns over the proposed changes to the Montana Teacher Licensure requirements under 10.57.301. I have been a K-12 teacher-librarian for 15 years in Missoula, MT. I hold a Masters in Teaching (EL Ed) and have endorsements in library, psychology, and dance. ARM 55 suggests that after two years of teaching a new teacher will have the qualifications, experience, and background knowledge to be able to be endorsed in a specialized field simply by successfully passing the PRAXIS is demoralizing to the integrity of all the qualified professionals who have taken specific classes and invested numerous hours to be experts in their field. Studying and passing a test does not make one an expert. Certainly, the standardized testing being done throughout the nation has proven that test-taking and actual learning are two very different abilities. I have taken PRAXIS exams for my Elementary Ed degree and Psychology endorsement. I can personally assure members of the ARM 55 committee that the PRAXIS exams do not have any bearing on whether or not one will be able to teach or do the work required in that subject area. The coursework, mentoring, and years of experience are needed. The experience and expertise specialized teachers and school librarians have cannot be replicated by studying and passing a test. School librarians do not only teach. They also run a library from top to bottom. That is a skill they can not learn from their time teaching other subjects or other teachers who do not run a library. It is a very different skill set only acquired through time and experience. A person's ability to teach has nothing to do with this half of the job.

The cuts ARM 55 proposes will directly affect the quality of education students receive. If we want to provide the best education for students, we must have qualified educators to offer this education. For libraries specifically, a qualified and effective school librarian must possess a wide range of skills:

- Collaborate with teachers to provide lessons on information literacy
- Technology leaders, and provide professional development to staff on technology
- Develop the collection to meet the needs of staff and students
- Curate and organize resources such as databases, ebooks, audiobooks, and print sources as well as teach students how to navigate them
- Promote reading for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment while meeting the diverse needs and interests of all readers
- Understand and operate the library management software
- Manage the budget
- Manage the library space to create an inviting environment
- Encourage critical thinking to create a community of lifelong learners

Two years of teaching and passing the PRAXIS will not prepare an educator to step into a specialized teaching field. Do not weaken the requirements for educators – this will have irreparable damage to the profession and lasting impacts on the quality of education Montana's students receive.

Thank you.

Jen Hossack (She/Her)

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