



**MONTANA
COMMUNITY
CHOICE SCHOOLS**

Community Choice Schools Commission Special Meeting

June 17, 2026

11:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

Zoom

Join by computer:

<https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/85362460926?pwd=BClziF7J16N527PpbWChlbnmPKXbu4.1>

Webinar ID: 853 6246 0926

Passcode:108249

Join by Phone:

+12063379723

Webinar ID: 853 6246 0926

Passcode: 108249

Agenda Packet Contents:

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2. Scope of Work for Special Education Training and Resources 2



Montana Community Choice Schools Commission
 Meeting Agenda
 June 17, 2026
 Zoom Webinar
 11:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

	Estimated Time	Details
Call to Order	11:00 a.m.	1. Pledge of Allegiance 2. Roll Call 3. Statement of Public Participation 4. Welcome and Introduction of Visitors
Note to the Public		1. Action may be taken on any item listed on the Choice Commission agenda. Per §2-3-103 MCA, <i>the Choice Commission encourages public comment on any item prior to final action.</i> 2. All times are approximate and may change as reasonably necessary.
Agenda		
Item 1	11:05 a.m.	◊ Action: Agenda Adoption for 6/17/2026
Item 2	11:10 a.m.	Business: ◊ Action on Intent to Sole Source for Special Education policy training and resources
Public Comment	11:30 a.m.	This time will be provided for public comment on items not listed on the agenda. This meeting is open to the public electronically. For those wishing to give virtual public comment, please contact cathy.kincheloe@mt.gov to request the Zoom link for the meeting. Written public comment may be submitted to the Director of Planning at cathy.kincheloe@mt.gov and will be shared with the Commission members and included as part of the official public record.
Adjourn	11:45 a.m.	
Note to the Public		**Agenda items are handled in the order listed on the approved agenda. Items may be rearranged unless listed "time certain." Public comment is welcome on all items listed as "Action" and as noted at the end of each meeting. **The Choice Commission will make reasonable accommodations for known disabilities that may interfere with an individual's ability to participate in the meeting. Individuals who require such accommodations should make requests to the Director of Planning as soon as possible prior to the meeting start date. You may email cathy.kincheloe@mt.gov or phone at 406-407-0727.



Montana Community Choice Schools Commission

Project Objective

Develop foundational resources for the Montana Community Choice Schools Commission to prepare Commission members to assess whether charter school applicants have the requisite understanding and skills to provide a free, appropriate public education to students with disabilities who enroll in the charter schools authorized by the Commission, and develop resources to assist these schools in building ongoing capacity to educate students with disabilities.

Proposed Scope of Work

To meet the project objectives, the scope of work will consist of three tasks leading to distinct deliverables: 1) training modules for Commissioners, 2) Montana Authorization Special Education Primer, and 3) Montana New School Special Education Primer. A brief description of each of these is provided below.

1. **Commissioner Training.** Develop and present a two-part virtual training sequence for Montana Community Choice School Commission members. The first module will focus on “Special Education 101” and outline core concepts of federal special education law and how it translates into practice in charter schools in Montana. The second module will focus on the application of the law through the lens of authorizing— specifically, the authorizer's role in ensuring schools are prepared to enroll and educate students with disabilities during the application, operations, and reauthorization phases. Particular attention will be given to identifying the benchmarks Commissioners should look for related to anticipated enrollment and budgeting to ensure schools are prepared to provide high-quality and compliant special education services.

The two 90-minute trainings will be delivered virtually via Zoom and recorded during the scheduled September and December Commission meetings.

2. **Montana Authorization Special Education Primer.** Develop a Montana-specific authorization primer that Commissioners and staff will use to establish expectations for applicants to articulate their vision for educating students with disabilities, conduct applicant interviews, develop monitoring plans that include potential indicators of distress, forecast corrective action options, and outline technical assistance structures.

3. **Montana New School Special Education Implementation Primer.** To ensure new charter schools operating as autonomous local education agencies are open and prepared to enroll and educate the diverse range of students who may enroll, we will develop a high-level implementation primer outlining the roles, responsibilities, and strategies to fulfill these obligations. Examples of toolkit contents include, but are not limited to: Special Education Laws 101, Enrollment Policies and Procedures, Discipline Guidance, and Developing a High Quality IEP.

Project Timeline and Fee

The following table provides an estimated timeline for the project phases.

Task	Start	End	Key Deliverable	Fee*
1. Commission Training Part I & II	7/15/26	9/9/26	Development and delivery of MCCSC training modules and supporting materials	\$5,000
1. Montana Authorization Special Education Primer	7/15/26	9/9/26	Montana-specific authorizer resources	\$12,000
1. Montana New School Special Education Implementation Primer	7/15/26	12/1/26	Montana-specific school leader special education planning and implementation resources	\$15,000

*Assumptions

- At the initiation of the project, the Sightline team will meet with the Commission leadership team to confirm expectations related to the

relationship between the Commission and schools in the portfolio (e.g., extent of technical assistance that may be provided)

- The estimate assumes at least one round of edits on each of the two written deliverables, given the evolving nature of the work in Montana.
- Sightline will submit format-ready deliverables, but graphic design work is not part of the scope of work.

Contact Information:

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Sightline Education Advisory
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Sightline Education Advisory, LLC

Inspired by the Founder’s lifelong love of swimming—particularly open water swimming—the name *Sightline* reflects the practice of “sighting”: identifying your destination and regularly checking your position to ensure you stay on course. It’s a metaphor for the work Sightline does: helping organizational leaders and their teams navigate complexity, stay on course, and make clear decisions.

Project Key Personnel

Lauren Morando Rhim is a high-impact, strategic, and collaborative leader with 20+ years’ experience in nonprofit and education leadership, nationally recognized for influence in K-12 education. She is passionate about improving opportunities for underserved communities and is an effective bridge-builder and creative, pragmatic problem-solver deeply committed to leveraging data to inform policy. Morando Rhim analyzes and evaluates programs, recommends strategic improvements, and builds, motivates, and guides high-performing teams to serve communities. She consults frequently with federal, state, and local advocates, policy leaders, funders, authorizers, and practitioners regarding pressing issues influencing the education of students with disabilities in the charter sector.

She co-founded and led the [Center for Learner Equity](#) (CLE) for 12 years and served as a Senior Advisor, providing interim leadership through its planned transition. As Executive Director and Co-Founder of CLE, Lauren provided strategic vision and oversaw research, advocacy, coalition development, and capacity-building efforts. She frequently presented at conferences and has served as an advisor to organizations including but not limited to the Council of Chief State School Officers, MIT Blueprint Labs, National Association of Charter School Authorizers, National Center on Learning Disabilities, New Hampshire State Legislature, Special Education Leadership Fellows, True Measure Special Education Collaborative, Tennessee State

Charter School Special Education Advisory Board, and the Vermont Special Education Advisory Council.

She holds a BA from the University of Vermont, an MA from The George Washington University, a PhD in education policy from the University of Maryland, and a Professional Business Certificate in Leadership & Management from the University of Vermont.

Paul O'Neill is an education attorney, professor, and author. He has extensive experience in guiding education organizations through challenges and growth. Throughout his career, he has advised schools, authorizers, networks, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and philanthropies on the rules and complexities that apply to educational organizations, as well as on effective board governance. He served as General Counsel of the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, one of the nation's leading charter school authorizing offices. He has also served for years as a lawyer in private practice, for boutique law firms specializing in education law as well as large corporate law firms, and as in-house counsel for a large school management organization.

Paul is currently President of Tugboat Education, a consultancy that advises authorizers and other education stakeholders in numerous states on best practices, and serves as a Partner and Co-Chair of the Education Law practice group at Barton Gilman LLP in NY. He is a former Associate. Director of the Newgrange School and Educational Outreach Center in New Jersey, which serves individuals with learning disabilities, and co-founder of the Center for Learner Equity. On the academic side, Paul has served for 25 years as an Adjunct Professor at Columbia University's Teachers College, where he teaches courses on education law and policy. He is the author of several books and numerous scholarly and professional articles. Paul holds a B.A. from Oberlin College, a J.D. from the University of Virginia, and an M.Ed. from Teachers College.