

# MONTANA BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION



**BOARD MEMBER  
HANDBOOK  
MARCH 2026**

**Board of Public  
Education  
(BPE)**

# MONTANA BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

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The Board of Public Education was created by the Montana Constitution of 1972 to exercise general supervision over the elementary and secondary schools of the state. The Board consists of seven members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate to staggered seven-year terms. By statute, the Governor must appoint members to the Board so that no more than four may be from one of the two commission districts and no more than four may be affiliated with the same political party. The Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Commissioner of Higher Education are ex-officio, non-voting members of the Board. In 1978 the Board added a student representative who is elected by the executive committee of the Montana Association of Student Councils. The Board maintains offices in Helena.

The Board is vested with constitutional rulemaking authority which is self-executing and independent from any power that is delegated to the Board by the Legislature. The Board of Public Education meets with the Board of Regents one time each year to form the Board of Education with responsibilities for long-range planning of the state's educational system and approving the unified education budget prior to each legislative session.

In addition to the constitutional mandate to exercise general supervision of the schools, the Board is assigned specific responsibilities by the Montana Legislature. A partial list of duties requires the Board to:

- adopt standards of accreditation for Montana schools and establish the accreditation status of each school;
- effect a uniform system of teacher certification, including the accreditation of the teacher and administrator training programs;
- consider the suspension or revocation of teacher certificates and hear appeals from the denial of teacher certificates;
- administer and order the distribution of state equalization aid;
- adopt policies for the special education of handicapped and gifted and talented students; and
- act as the governing agency for the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind.

# MONTANA BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

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The Board of Public Education and the Office of Public Instruction are separate state agencies that must work collaboratively and cooperatively to create, implement, and execute education policy in Montana. The head of the Office of Public Instruction is the elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction. To illustrate, the Board of Public Education orders the distribution of the state BASE aid to schools and the Superintendent of Public Instruction distributes the BASE aid. The elected Superintendent of Public Instruction makes accreditation recommendations to the Board of Public Education as part of his/her general supervision responsibilities of K-12 schools, and the Board has the responsibility to evaluate and take action on the recommendations..

Local school district boards of trustees were created by Article X Section 8 of the Montana Constitution and are vested with the powers of local supervision and control of schools in their respective school districts. The local board of trustees govern and control the individual schools within the district under the confines of the Board of Public Education's accreditation standards.

The Board of Public Education values its proactive association with the State Legislature. The Board has actively been involved in education interim studies, committees, and research. The Legislature has spearheaded the organization of the "Constitutional Players", which consists of members from the Education Interim Committee, Education Interim Budget Committee, Board of Public Education, Board of Regents, Commissioner of Higher Education, Montana School Boards Association, Governor's Office, and the Office of Public Instruction. The Constitutional Players have met numerous times since 2021 and reached consensus on focusing on four areas: Support proficiency-based learning, Transform the teaching profession and increase retention of teachers, Promote rigorous career and technical education programs, and Support early childhood education. Many of these areas have garnered support from the full Legislature, including early literacy and numeracy targeted interventions, expansion of the TEACH Act to the STARS Act, increased advanced opportunities and transformational learning programs, and establishment of public charters schools.

## MACIE

The Montana Advisory Council for Indian Education (MACIE) was created by the Board of Public Education in 1984 to advise the Board of Public Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction on matters related to Indian education. The purpose of the Council is to... "provide for more effective and meaningful participation by Indian people in planning, implementation, and administration of relevant educational services and programs under the authority of local school boards."

The Council is comprised of representatives of the twelve tribal nations in Montana and other groups working in the interest of Indian people.

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

### Term Expires

2/1/27	Tim Tharp, Chair <a href="mailto:timtharpmt@gmail.com">timtharpmt@gmail.com</a>	PO Box 215 Savage, MT 59262	C 406-788-3168
2/1/28	Julia Maxwell <a href="mailto:jmaxwell@marionschoolmt.com">jmaxwell@marionschoolmt.com</a>	9390 US Hwy 2W Marion, MT 59925	C 406-564-9031
2/1/29	Renee Rasmussen <a href="mailto:renee.rasmussen.mt@gmail.com">renee.rasmussen.mt@gmail.com</a>	3 Skyline Dr Clancy, MT 59635	C 406-949-3126
2/1/30	Ron Slinger, Vice Chair <a href="mailto:slingerR@milescc.edu">slingerR@milescc.edu</a>	116 Atlantic Ave Unit 41 Miles City, MT 59301	C 406-874-6158 303-579-7452
2/1/31	Lisa Schmidt <a href="mailto:l.schmidt@a-land-of-grass-ranch.com">l.schmidt@a-land-of-grass-ranch.com</a>	564 Graham Ranch Lane Conrad, MT 59425	H 406-278-0159
2/1/32	Hannah Nieskens <a href="mailto:hnieskens@whitehallmt.org">hnieskens@whitehallmt.org</a>	564 MT Highway 359 Cardwell, MT 59721	C 406-600-1120
2/1/33	Amanda Mills <a href="mailto:amanda_e_mills@outlook.com">amanda_e_mills@outlook.com</a>	460 Green Tree Drive Belgrade, MT 59714	C 916.955.4291 W 406-595-0148
7/1/26	Lydia Comstock, Student Rep. <a href="mailto:lydia.comstock@icloud.com">lydia.comstock@icloud.com</a>	415 Skyline Dr NE Great Falls, MT 59404	H 406-750-4657

## **EX OFFICIO MEMBERS**

Greg Gianforte, Governor Office of the Governor	PO Box 200801 Helena, MT 59620-0801	O 406-444-3311
Susie Hedalen, Superintendent Office of Public Instruction	PO Box 202501 Helena, MT 59620-2501	O 406-444-5644
Clayton Christian, Commissioner Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education	2500 Broadway, PO Box 203101 Helena, MT 59620-3101	O 406-444-6570

## **BOARD STAFF**

McCall Flynn, Executive Director <a href="mailto:mflynn@mt.gov">mflynn@mt.gov</a>	PO Box 200601 Helena, MT 59620-0601	O 406-444-0300 C 406-691-0550
Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist <a href="mailto:kmstockton@mt.gov">kmstockton@mt.gov</a>	PO Box 200601 Helena, MT 59620-0601	O 406-444-0302
Julie Balsam, Administrative Assistant <a href="mailto:jbalsam@mt.gov">jbalsam@mt.gov</a>	PO Box 200601 Helena, MT 59620-0601	O 406-444-6576
Lea Ann Munkres, Program Officer <a href="mailto:lmunkres@mt.gov">lmunkres@mt.gov</a>	PO Box 200601 Helena, MT 59620-0601	O 406-444-0159

## **MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND**

Paul Furthmyre, Superintendent <a href="mailto:pfurthmyre@msdb.k12.mt.us">pfurthmyre@msdb.k12.mt.us</a>	3911 Central Avenue Great Falls, MT 59401	O 800-882-6732
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# Board of Public Education

## Board of Public Education Strategic Plan 2025-2026

### MISSION STATEMENT:

The Board of Public Education has a mission statement as directed by the Montana Constitution, which states, “There is a board of public education to exercise general supervision over the public school system and such other public educational institutions as may be assigned by law”. The Board of Public Education was established to supervise, serve, maintain, and strengthen Montana’s system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools.

### STRATEGIC PLAN:

#### 1. Exercise the Board’s constitutional and statutory authority to improve Montana’s education system.

- Work with constitutional education authorities to ensure they understand and respect the constitutional authority of the Board of Public Education.
- Collaborate with constitutional education authorities around initiatives to improve and support public education in Montana and implementation of legislative priorities and directives.
- Work with the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education, Office of Public Instruction, and education partners to implement Indian Education for All.
- Promote and maintain a transparent and open public participation process.
- Support professional development for Board members to improve their understanding of contemporary issues in education and to provide networking opportunities within the state and national educator communities.

#### 2. Promote a safe learning environment.

- Work with education partners to help school districts navigate federal and state regulations and funding.
- Assign a member of the Board of Public Education or designee to participate in the Montana School Safety Advisory Committee meetings.

#### 3. Evaluate and adopt the Board’s accreditation standards to ensure they are contemporary and effective to improve quality education for all Montana students.

- Maintain the Board’s commitment to rigorous standards and assessments, and support flexibilities within the current frameworks.
- Collaborate with education partners in support of drafting and implementing state standards, including efforts around licensing, content, transportation, assessment, accreditation, educator preparation programs, and other standards within the Board of Public Education’s authority.

#### 4. Foster quality teaching and administration.

- Work with legislators and other entities to ensure they understand the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Public Education.

- Adopt revisions to the Administrative Rules of Montana that are within the Board of Public Education’s authority.
- Work with partners in P-12 and higher education to coordinate recruitment and retention efforts of teachers, staff, and school leaders.
- Receive guidance from professional education organizations and take action on their recommendations, when appropriate.

**5. Support the preparation of all Montana students for employment, post-secondary education, and civic life.**

- Work to support and expand pathways to career and life success through dual enrollment, internships, work-based learning, etc.
- Collaborate with the Montana Digital Academy to support online instruction for students, and assign a member of the Board of Public Education or designee to serve on the Montana Digital Academy Governing Board.
- Plan and prepare for the Board of Education meetings to support P-20 priorities and adopt a unified education budget.
- Work with school districts and education partners to promote the Montana Seal of Biliteracy.
- Prioritize and support innovation through the public charter school application process.
- Work with and administratively support the Montana Community Choice School Commission.
- Receive guidance from the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education and take action on their recommendations, when appropriate.

**6. Recognize and fulfill the Board’s statutory obligation to the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind.**

- Hire, support, and evaluate the Superintendent of the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB).
- Support and take action on personnel items, out of state travel requests, policies, and other items.
- Assign the Executive Director and MSDB liaison to participate in the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Foundation meetings.
- Advocate for budgetary resources to support MSDB’s programmatic and facility requests.

**STATE OF MONTANA  
BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

**BYLAWS**

**Article I. Name**

The legal name of the Board is the Board of Public Education.

**Article II. Objective**

The objective of the Board is to carry out its constitutional and statutory responsibility to exercise general supervision, in cooperation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, over the public school system and other such public educational institutions as may be assigned by law.

**Article III. Membership**

The Board consists of seven members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Not more than four may be from each of the two commission districts per § 2-15-156, MCA, and not more than four may be affiliated with the same political party. The Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Commissioner of Higher Education are ex-officio, non-voting members of the Board. There is also a non-voting student member, appointed by the Montana Association of Student Councils. The term of members appointed to the Board shall be seven years. When a vacancy occurs, the Governor shall appoint a member for the remainder of the term of the incumbent. Members appointed to the Board, before discharging their duties, shall take and subscribe to the constitutional oath of office.

**Article IV. Officers**

The officers of the Board shall consist of a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall be elected among the appointed membership for the period of one year; annual reelection is permissible. Election of the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall be conducted by voice vote. The Chairperson-elect and Vice Chairperson-elect shall assume their respective office upon adjournment of the meeting at which they were elected. If the office of the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson is vacated prior to the expiration of the term, the Board will hold an election to fill the vacated office; the newly elected officer will serve for the remainder of the unexpired term and assume the gavel immediately. The duties of the Chairperson shall include presiding at meetings, participating in the construction of meeting agendas, and appointing all committees. The Chairperson shall vote on all matters. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall preside and shall perform such duties as are prescribed for the Chairperson.

## **Article V. Executive Director**

The Board shall appoint, prescribe the term and duties, and establish the salary of the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall serve as administrator to the Board and also as liaison between the Board and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Legislature, and the Governor's office.

## **Article VI. Meetings**

According to § 20-2-112, MCA, the Board shall meet at least quarterly. When necessary, the Board may hold meetings for resolution of specific agenda items either by a meeting in person, virtually, or by a combination of both. Board members shall attend all scheduled meetings in person. If a Board member is unable to attend in person, the chairperson may allow participation virtually.

Special meetings may be called by the Governor, the chairperson of the Board, the Executive Director, or a request in writing of four regular appointed members. In the case of a special meeting, the Executive Director shall provide notice to each regular and ex-officio member at least 48 hours in advance.

The Board of Public Education and the Board of Regents shall meet yearly as the State Board of Education per § 20-2-101, MCA.

Meetings of the Board shall be open to the public. The Chairperson may close the meeting to the public if he or she determines:

- a. That the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure, or
- b. That an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or the litigating position of the Board.

The Chairperson shall read for the minutes the reason for the closing, or the minutes will show that the person in question requested a closed session.

## **Article VII. Quorum**

A majority of the appointed members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

## **Article VIII. Organization**

### **Section A. Officers**

The Board shall select, by a majority vote, a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from its appointed members each September. The term of elected office shall be for one year. The Chairperson shall be the presiding officer and shall preside over all regular, special,

and public meetings of the Board. The Vice Chairperson shall perform the functions of the Chairperson in their absence.

### **Section B. Committees**

Standing committees shall be as follows:

1. An Executive Committee: composed of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and the Executive Director
2. An Accreditation Committee
3. A Licensure Committee
4. A Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Committee
5. A Legislative Committee
6. An Assessment Committee
7. A Charter School Committee

The Board may create special committees as deemed necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the Board. Members of the special committees shall be appointed by the Chairperson.

Duties of the committees shall be to review, report on, and make recommendations concerning any item referred to them and alert the Chairperson and Executive Director on any matters which should be placed on the agenda for Board discussion or action. The Chairperson shall serve as a member of all committees, unless otherwise determined by the Chairperson. The Executive Director shall attend all committee meetings and provide support as determined by the committee chairperson.

The Board shall establish a Montana School for the Deaf and Blind Committee. Due to the uniqueness of the operations of the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, the Committee is expected to meet more regularly than other committees of the Board. As required under § 20-8-101, MCA, the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind is under general supervision, direction, and control of the Board. This relationship requires more regular oversight and involvement in the maintenance and governance of the school.

### **Article IX. Order of Business**

The regular order of business shall be as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call

4. Statement of Public Participation
5. Welcome Visitors
6. Public Comment
7. Consent Agenda Adoption
8. Agenda Adoption
9. Date and Place of Next Meeting
10. Public Comment
11. Adjournment

### **Article X. Communications**

All official communications should come to the attention of the Board through the Executive Director of the Board.

### **Article XI. Parliamentary Procedure**

The Board will use Robert's Rules of Order as a guide on questions of parliamentary procedure.

### **Article XII. Amendments**

These bylaws may be added to or amended by a majority vote at any meeting of the Board of Public Education provided that a quorum is present and provided that the proposed amendment is sent in writing to members of the Board of Public Education at least seven days in advance.

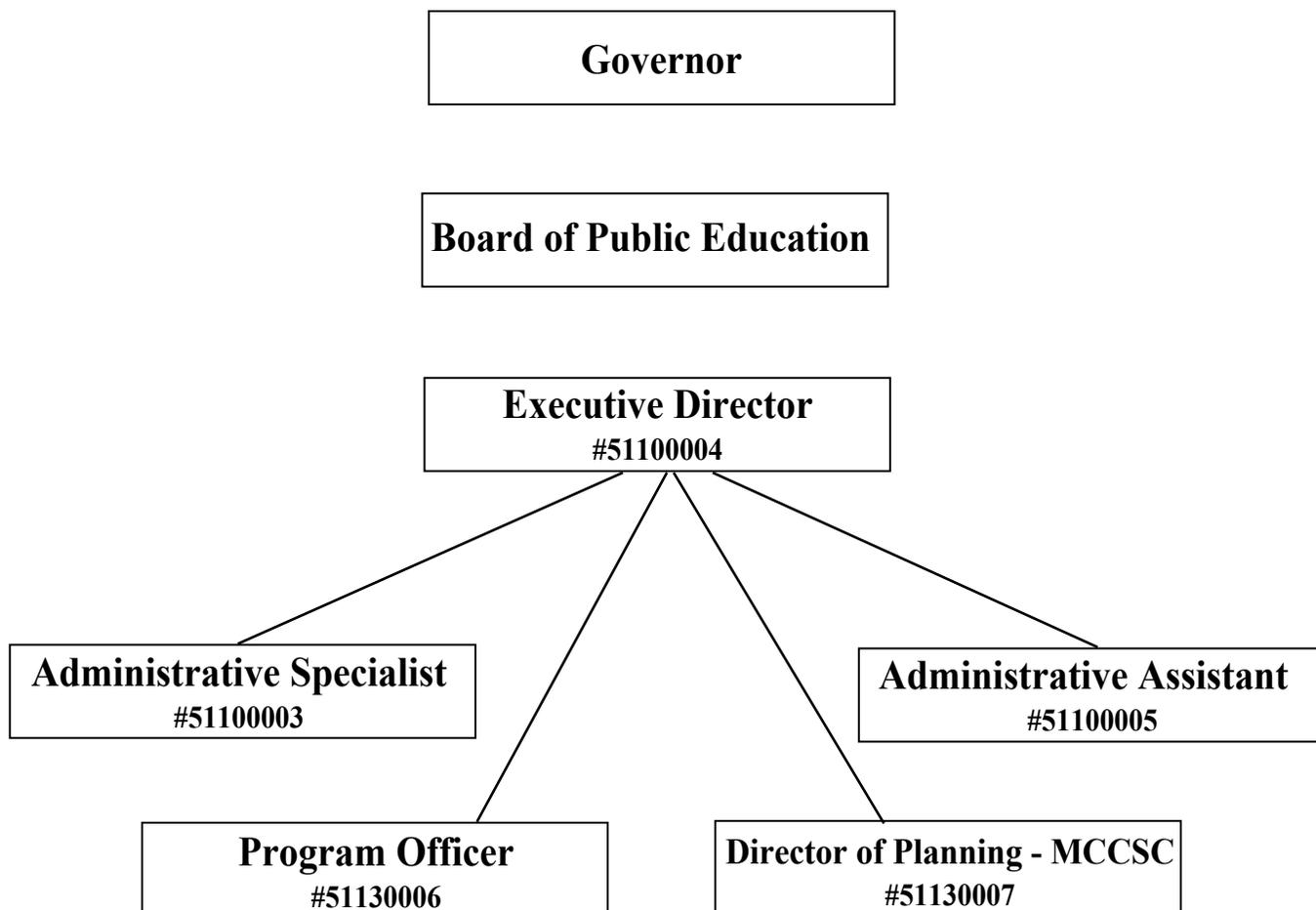
### **Article XIII. Professional Development**

The Board of Public Education offers professional development opportunities for Board members whenever possible. Board members may attend at least one professional development conference each year, when funding is available. All requests must be submitted to the Executive Director at least one month prior to the conference. Board members should submit the request using the Request and Justification for Travel Form. All out of state travel and travel that exceeds \$1,000 must be approved by the Executive Committee prior to participation.

[Request and Justification for Travel Form \(mt.gov\)](#)



# Board of Public Education





# Board of Public Education

## ANNUAL AGENDA CALENDAR January 2026 – November 2026

*(Proposed items from OPI in italics)*

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### January 15-16, 2026 – Helena, MT

Exiting Board Member – Last Meeting & Recognition  
 MACIE Update  
 Review Community Choice School Annual Reports  
 Action on ABCTe Program Approval  
 Action on Authorizing Public Charter Schools  
*Transportation Report*  
*Assessment Update*  
*Federal Update*  
*Accreditation Report*  
*Teacher Licensure Report*  
*Qualify Advanced Opportunity Grant Applications*  
*Action on Transformational Learning Phase II Grants*  
*Quality Educator Loan Assistance Program Report*  
*Content Standards Revision Update*  
 Action on MSDB Superintendent Contract Extension  
**MSDB Superintendent Performance Evaluation & Contract Extension Discussion**

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### March 19-20, 2026 – Ronan, MT

MACIE Update  
 Action on MSDB School Calendar  
 Action on Early Literacy Screening Tools (Odd Years)  
*Assessment Update*  
*Federal Update*  
*Accreditation Report*  
*Annual School Food Services Report*  
*Review Draft CAEP MOU*  
*Content Standards Revision Update*

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### May 21-22, 2026 – Great Falls, MT

Student Representative – Last Meeting & Recognition  
 MACIE Update  
 Review Public Charter School Performance Reports  
*Action on K-12 Schools Payment Schedule*  
*Assessment Update*  
*Accreditation Update*  
*Action on CAEP MOU*  
*Federal Update*  
*Content Standards Revision Update*  
*Action on Accreditation Status of All Schools*  
**Executive Director Performance Evaluation**

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### July 22-24, 2026 – Helena, MT

Joint MACIE Meeting and Tribal Consultation  
 Strategic Planning Meeting  
 MACIE Update  
 Action on MSDB/Golden Triangle Co-op  
*Indian Education for All Report*  
*Assessment Update*  
*Federal Update*  
*OPI Staffing Report*  
*Accreditation Report*  
*Content Standards Revision Update*

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### September 24-25, 2026 – Glendive, MT

Election of Board Officers  
 Action on Strategic Planning Items  
 MACIE Update  
 Montana Digital Academy Update  
 MACIE Renewal (Even Years)  
 Review Community Choice School Academic Performance and Financial Reports  
*Annual HiSET Report*  
*Annual Special Education Report*  
*Accreditation Update*  
*Assessment Update*  
*Federal Update*  
*Content Standards Revision Update*

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### November 18-20, 2026 – Bozeman, MT

Board of Education Meeting  
 Joint Montana Council of Deans of Education Meeting  
 MACIE Update  
*Assessment Update*  
*Federal Update*  
*Annual Data Collection*  
*Action on Variance to Standards Requests & Renewals*  
*Accreditation Report*  
*Youth Risk Behavior Survey Update (Odd Years)*  
*Annual Professional Development Unit Providers Report*  
*Content Standards Revision Update*



# Board of Public Education

## Board of Public Education Committee Assignments March 2026

### STANDING COMMITTEES

#### **Executive Committee**

Tim Tharp, Chair  
Ron Slinger, Vice Chair  
McCall Flynn, Executive Director

#### **Licensure Committee**

Ron Slinger, Chair  
Amanda Mills, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

#### **Charter School Committee**

Lisa Schmidt, Chair  
Amanda Mills, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

#### **MSDB Committee**

Lisa Schmidt, Chair  
Julia Maxwell, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

#### **Legislative Committee**

Renee Rasmussen, Chair  
Ron Slinger, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

#### **Assessment Committee**

Renee Rasmussen, Chair  
Hannah Nieskens, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

#### **Accreditation Committee**

Hannah Nieskens, Chair  
Julia Maxwell, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

### SPECIAL COMMITTEES

#### **Artificial Intelligence and Technology Committee**

Hannah Nieskens, Chair  
Ron Slinger, Member  
Tim Tharp, Member

### ADVISORY GROUP LIAISONS

Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education – Julia Maxwell  
Montana School Safety Advisory Committee – McCall Flynn

### OTHER COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Education and Workforce Data Governing Board – Tim Tharp  
Montana Digital Academy Governing Board – Hannah Nieskens

# Professional Educators of Montana Code of Ethics

## Model Principles

To serve the needs of all students, it is essential that professional educators strive to maintain the highest ethical standards. It is their responsibility to create learning environments to help all students reach their full potential while honoring the trust and confidence placed in them by students, families, colleagues, and the community.

The Professional Educators of Montana Code of Ethics serves as a set of aspirational principles intended to guide educator conduct and protect the rights of all students. These model principles are intended to be used by school districts, educator preparation programs, and other educational entities as they seek to adhere to the highest ethical standards in their service to students and families, the profession, and the community.

*Principle I. Commitment to Students and Families. The ethical educator:*

- A. Makes the well-being of students the foundation of all decisions and actions.
- B. Promotes a spirit of inquiry, creativity, and high expectations.
- C. Assures just and equitable treatment of every student.
- D. Protects students when their learning or well-being is threatened by the unsafe, incompetent, unethical, or illegal practice of any person.
- E. Keeps information confidential that has been obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling purpose in the best interest of students, or is required by law.
- F. Respects the roles, responsibilities, and rights of students, parents, and guardians.
- G. Maintains appropriate educator-student relationship boundaries in all respects, including speech, print, and digital communications.
- H. Demonstrates an understanding of educational inclusion, respects human diversity, and provides opportunities and resources for all students to reach their full potential.

*Principle II. Commitment to the Profession. The ethical educator:*

- A. Fulfills professional obligations with diligence and integrity.
- B. Demonstrates continued professional growth, collaboration, and accountability.
- C. Respects the roles, responsibilities, and rights of colleagues, support personnel, and supervisors.
- D. Contributes to the development of the profession's body of knowledge.
- E. Manages information, including student data and assessments, with integrity.
- F. Teaches without distortion, bias, or prejudice.
- G. Represents professional qualifications accurately.

*Principle III. Commitment to the Community. The ethical educator:*

- A. Models the principles of citizenship in a democratic society.
- B. Protects the civil and human rights of students and colleagues.
- C. Assumes responsibility for personal actions.
- D. Demonstrates good stewardship of public resources.
- E. Exemplifies a positive, active role in school-community relations.
- F. Adheres to the terms of contracts, district policies and procedures, and relevant statutes and regulations.
- G. Uses social media and digital communications responsibly and professionally.

# **Roles and Responsibilities**

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## **Montana Board of Public Education Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Constitution of Montana – Article X – EDUCATION AND PUBLIC LANDS**

**Section 9. Boards of education.** (1) There is a state board of education composed of the board of regents of higher education and the board of public education. It is responsible for long-range planning, and for coordinating and evaluating policies and programs for the state's educational systems. It shall submit unified budget requests. A tie vote at any meeting may be broken by the governor, who is an ex officio member of each component board.

(2) (a) The government and control of the Montana university system is vested in a board of regents of higher education which shall have full power, responsibility, and authority to supervise, coordinate, manage and control the Montana university system and shall supervise and coordinate other public educational institutions assigned by law.

(b) The board consists of seven members appointed by the governor, and confirmed by the senate, to overlapping terms, as provided by law. The governor and superintendent of public instruction are ex officio non-voting members of the board.

(c) The board shall appoint a commissioner of higher education and prescribe his term and duties.

(d) The funds and appropriations under the control of the board of regents are subject to the same audit provisions as are all other state funds.

(3) (a) There is a board of public education to exercise general supervision over the public school system and such other public educational institutions as may be assigned by law. Other duties of the board shall be provided by law.

(b) The board consists of seven members appointed by the governor, and confirmed by the senate, to overlapping terms as provided by law. The governor, commissioner of higher education and state superintendent of public instruction shall be ex officio non-voting members of the board.

### **Constitution of Montana – Article III – GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**Section 1. Separation of powers.** The power of the government of this state is divided into three distinct branches--legislative, executive, and judicial. No person or persons charged with the exercise of power properly belonging to one branch shall exercise any power properly belonging to either of the others, except as in this constitution expressly directed or permitted.

### **Montana Code Annotated 2025 – Board of Public Education**

**2-15-1507. Board of public education.** The board of public education created in Article X, section 9, subsection (3), of the Montana constitution consists of seven members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate. The governor, superintendent of public instruction, and commissioner of higher education are ex officio nonvoting members of the board of public education.

**History:** En. Sec. 2, Ch. 344, L. 1973; R.C.M. 1947, 75-5610(1).

## Montana Code Annotated 2025 – Appointments

**2-15-1508. Appointments to board of public education and board of regents -- conditions -- vacancy.** (1) Appointments to the board of public education and to the board of regents are subject to the following qualifications:

- (a) Not more than four may be from one district provided for in **2-15-156**.
- (b) Not more than four may be affiliated with the same political party.
- (c) The terms of members appointed to each board are 7 years except as provided in subsection (3).
- (d) When a vacancy occurs, the governor shall appoint a member for the remainder of the term of the incumbent, and the appointment must preserve the balance required by subsections (1)(a) and (1)(b).
- (e) A person may not be appointed to concurrent memberships on the board of public education and the board of regents.

(2) An appointed member of either board shall take and subscribe to the constitutional oath of office and file it with the secretary of state before the person may serve as a member of either board.

(3) (a) One seat of the appointed members on the board of regents is reserved for membership by a student appointed by the governor. The student must be registered as a full-time student at a unit of higher education under jurisdiction of the board of regents. The length of term of the student member is 1 year. The term begins July 1 and ends June 30. The student regent may be reappointed to succeeding terms subject to subsection (3)(b). The provisions of subsections (1)(a) and (1)(b) do not apply to the student member and may not affect the balance of the remaining appointive membership on the board of regents.

(b) The governor shall appoint the student provided for in subsection (3)(a) based upon a nomination provided by a student organization designated by the board of regents. The student organization shall nominate no fewer than three qualified students. If the governor finds that none of the students nominated are acceptable, the governor may request a new slate of nominees. Nominations must be forwarded to the governor in March immediately preceding the end of a regular term, and the governor shall make the appointment before the end of the succeeding June. In the event of a vacancy, a replacement must be appointed as soon as is practicable and in the same manner as the original appointment.

**History:** En. Secs. 2, 11, Ch. 344, L. 1973; R.C.M. 1947, 75-5610(part), 75-5619; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 52, L. 1993; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 206, L. 1999; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 254, L. 2003; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 120, L. 2007; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 285, L. 2019.

## Montana Code Annotated 2025 – Combined Boards as State Board

**20-2-101. Combined boards as state board -- budget review -- officers -- meetings -- quorum.** (1) The board of public education and the board of regents meeting together as the state board of education shall be responsible for long-range planning and for coordinating and evaluating policies and programs for the public educational systems of the state. The state board of education shall review and unify the budget requests of educational entities assigned by law to the board of public education, the board of regents, or the state board of education and shall submit a unified budget request with recommendations to the appropriate state agency.

(2) The governor is the president of, the superintendent of public instruction is the secretary to, and the commissioner shall be a nonvoting participant at all meetings of the state board of education.

(3) The state board of education may select a member to chair its meetings in the absence of the governor.

(4) A tie vote at any meeting may be broken by the governor.

(5) A majority of members appointed to the board of public education and the board of regents shall constitute a quorum for transaction of business as the state board of education.

(6) The board of public education and the board of regents shall meet at least once yearly as the state board of education.

(7) Other meetings of the state board of education may be called by the governor, by both the secretary to the board of public education and the secretary to the board of regents, or by joint action of eight appointed members, four each from the board of public education and the board of regents. All meetings of the state board

of education shall be for the purposes set forth in subsection (1) above or for the purpose of considering other matters of common concern to the board of public education and the board of regents, but the state board of education may not exercise the powers and duties assigned by the 1972 Montana constitution and by law to the board of public education and the board of regents.

**History:** En. Sec. 7, Ch. 344, L. 1973; R.C.M. 1947, 75-5615; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 21, L. 1985; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 112, L. 2023.

## **Montana Code Annotated 2025 – Adoption of Rules**

**20-2-114. Adoption of rules – seal – record of proceedings.** The board of public education, the board of regents, and the state board of education each shall:

- (1) adopt rules consistent with the constitution or laws of the state of Montana necessary for its own government or the proper execution of the powers and duties conferred upon it by law;
- (2) adopt and use an official seal to authenticate its official acts; and
- (3) keep a record of its proceedings.

**History:** En. Sec. 8, Ch. 344, L. 1973; R.C.M. 1947, 75-5616.

## **Montana Code Annotated 2025 – Powers and Duties**

**20-2-121. Board of public education – powers and duties.** The board of public education shall:

- (1) effect an orderly and uniform system for teacher certification and specialist certification and for the issuance of an emergency authorization of employment by adopting the policies prescribed by 20-4-102 and 20-4-111;
- (2) consider the suspension or revocation of teacher or specialist certificates and appeals from the denial of teacher or specialist certification in accordance with the provisions of 20-4-110;
- (3) administer and order the distribution of BASE aid in accordance with the provisions of 20-9-344;
- (4) adopt and enforce policies to provide uniform standards and regulations for the design, construction, and operation of school buses in accordance with the provisions of 20-10-111;
- (5) adopt policies prescribing the conditions when school may be conducted on Saturday and the types of pupil-instruction-related days and approval procedure for those days in accordance with the provisions of 20-1-303 and 20-1-304;
- (6) adopt standards of accreditation and establish the accreditation status of every school in accordance with the provisions of 20-7-101 and 20-7-102;
- (7) approve or disapprove educational media selected by the superintendent of public instruction for the educational media library in accordance with the provisions of 20-7-201;
- (8) adopt policies for the conduct of special education in accordance with the provisions of 20-7-402;
- (9) adopt rules for issuance of documents certifying equivalency of completion of secondary education in accordance with 20-7-131;
- (10) adopt policies for the conduct of programs for gifted and talented children in accordance with the provisions of 20-7-903 and 20-7-904;
- (11) adopt rules for student assessment in the public schools; and
- (12) perform any other duty prescribed from time to time by this title or any other act of the legislature.

**History:** En. 75-5607 by Sec. 8, Ch. 5, L. 1971; (amd. Sec. 15, Ch. 434, L. 1975 -- [unconstitutional, 167 M 261]; Sec. 15, Ch. 434, L. 1975 repealed by Sec. 1, Ch. 4, L. 1977); amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 266, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 75-5607; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 511, L. 1979; amd. Sec. 9, Ch. 598, L. 1979; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 94, L. 1983; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 312, L. 1983; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 377, L. 1987; amd. Sec. 40, Ch. 633, L. 1993; amd. Sec. 7, Ch. 138, L. 2005.

## Montana Code Annotated 2025 – Standards of Accreditation

**20-7-101. Accreditation standards – process for adoption.** (1) (a) Accreditation standards, as defined in **20-1-101**, for all schools must be adopted by the board of public education upon the recommendations of the superintendent of public instruction. The superintendent shall develop recommendations in accordance with subsection (2). For an accreditation standard that requires implementation by school districts, the recommendations presented to the board must include an economic impact statement, as described in **2-4-405**, prepared in consultation with the negotiated rulemaking committee under subsection (2).

(b) For accreditation standards addressing academic requirements, program area standards, or content and performance standards, the economic impact statement under subsection (1)(a) must include an analysis of the ability of school districts to implement the standard within existing resources, including time. The intent of this subsection (1)(b) is to ensure that school districts have the capacity to adhere to required accreditation standards within a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools.

(2) The accreditation standards recommended by the superintendent of public instruction must be developed through the negotiated rulemaking process under Title 2, chapter 5, part 1. The superintendent may form a negotiated rulemaking committee for accreditation standards to consider multiple proposals. The negotiated rulemaking committee may not exist for longer than 2 years. The committee must represent the diverse circumstances of schools of all sizes across the state and must include representatives from the following groups:

(a) school district trustees;  
(b) school administrators;  
(c) teachers;  
(d) school business officials;  
(e) parents;  
(f) taxpayers; and  
(g) for content and performance standard revisions, representatives of Montana Indian tribes, as required under **20-1-503**.

(3) Prior to adoption or amendment of any accreditation standard, the board shall submit each proposal, including the economic impact statement required under subsection (1), to:

(a) during a regular legislative session, the joint appropriations subcommittee on education; or  
(b) during the legislative interim, the education interim budget committee established in **5-12-501**, for review at least 1 month in advance of a scheduled committee meeting.

(4) Unless the expenditures by school districts required under the proposal are determined by the appropriate committee under subsection (3) to be insubstantial expenditures that can be readily absorbed into the budgets of existing district programs, the board may not implement the standard until July 1 following:

(a) under subsection (3)(a), the current legislative session; or  
(b) under subsection (3)(b), the next regular legislative session and shall request the superintendent of public instruction include a request in the superintendent's budget that the same legislature fund implementation of the proposed standard.

(5) The provisions of this section may not be construed to reduce or limit the authority of the education interim committee to review administrative rules, including accreditation standards, within its jurisdiction pursuant to **5-5-215**.

(6) Standards for the retention of school records must be as provided in **20-1-212**.

**History:** En. 75-7501 by Sec. 372, Ch. 5, L. 1971; R.C.M. 1947, 75-7501; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 543, L. 1983; amd. Sec. 4, Ch. 208, L. 2005; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 379, L. 2015; amd. Sec. 48, Ch. 261, L. 2021; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 81, L. 2023; amd. Sec. 4, Ch. 557, L. 2025.

## Montana Code Annotated 2025 – School Bus Standards

**20-10-111. Duties of board of public education.** (1) The board of public education, with the advice of the Montana department of justice and the superintendent of public instruction, shall adopt and enforce policies, not inconsistent with the motor vehicle laws, to provide uniform standards and regulations for the design, construction, and operation of school buses in the state of Montana. The policies must:

(a) prescribe minimum standards for the design, construction, and operation of school buses consistent with:

(i) the recommendations adopted by the national conference on school transportation; and

(ii) the federal motor vehicle safety standards;

(b) prescribe standards and specifications for the lighting equipment and special warning devices to be carried by school buses in conformity with:

(i) current specifications approved by the society of automobile engineers;

(ii) motor vehicle laws; and

(iii) the requirement that all school buses have an alternately flashing prewarning lighting system of four amber signal lamps to be used while preparing to stop and an alternately flashing warning lighting system of four red signal lamps to be used while stopped in accordance with 61-9-402;

(c) establish other driver qualifications considered necessary in addition to the qualifications required in 20-10-103;

(d) prescribe criteria for the establishment of transportation service areas for school bus purposes by the county transportation committee that shall allow for the establishment of service areas without regard to the district boundary lines within the county;

(e) prescribe other criteria for the determination of the residence of a pupil that may be considered necessary in addition to the criteria established in 20-10-105; and

(f) prescribe standards for the measurement of the child seating capacity of school buses, to be known as the rated capacity.

(2) The board of public education shall prescribe other policies necessary for the proper administration and operation of individual transportation programs that are consistent with the transportation provisions of this title.

**History:** En. 75-7004 by Sec. 281, Ch. 5, L. 1971; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 416, L. 1973; R.C.M. 1947, 75-7004; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 455, L. 1981; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 280, L. 1989; amd. Sec. 13, Ch. 343, L. 1999; amd. Sec. 19, Ch. 237, L. 2001; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 246, L. 2021.

## Montana Code Annotated 2025 – Montana School for the Deaf and Blind

**20-8-101. Montana school for deaf and blind -- state-supported special school.** The school for the deaf and blind, located in the city of Great Falls, is known and designated as the Montana school for the deaf and blind and must be conducted as a separate and independent unit and special school of the state of Montana under the general supervision, direction, and control of the board of public education. However, the transfer of that school or any change in the name of the school or in the objects or purposes of the school may not be considered or construed to impair or work any forfeiture or alteration of any rights, grants, or property made to or acquired by that school or by the state for the use and benefit of that school.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 182, L. 1943; amd. Sec. 39, Ch. 266, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 80-102; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 151, L. 1983; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 72, L. 2003.

**20-8-103. Board of public education rules.** The board of public education shall adopt and prescribe rules as the board considers necessary and proper for the maintenance and government of the school, the admission of children in conformity with the provisions of this chapter, and the qualifications and compensation of the

superintendent and teaching staff of the school, provided that the superintendent must have a ready and working knowledge of the sign language.

**History:** En. Sec. 3, Ch. 182, L. 1943; R.C.M. 1947, 80-104; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 392, L. 1989.

**Montana First Judicial District Court  
County of Lewis and Clark**

**MONTANA BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION,**  
Petitioner,

Cause No. BDV – 91 – 1072

vs.

**MONTANA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE COMMITTEE,**  
Respondent.

ORDER AND DECISION

This matter is before the Court on motions by all parties for summary judgment.

**FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

In 1989, the Board of Public Education (hereinafter the Board), adopted Rule 10.55.804, A.R.M. That rule, in pertinent part, provided as follows:

Beginning 7-1-92 the school shall make an identifiable effort to provide educational services to gifted and talented students, which are commensurate with their needs and foster a positive self-image.

The Administrative Code Committee felt that the aforementioned rule was in contravention of Section 20-7-902(1), MCA, which provides:

A school district may identify gifted and talented children and devise programs to serve them."  
(emphasis added).

The Board would not change its rule. Thereafter, at the request of the Administrative Code Committee, the 1991 legislature passed House Bill 116 which states as follows:

Whereas, the Legislature, not the Executive Branch, is the lawmaking branch of the state government under the Montana Constitution; and

Whereas, the Legislature may delegate its power to pass laws to the Executive Branch, which may then, within certain limits, adopt administrative rules that have the force and effect of law; and

Whereas, a rule may not conflict with a statute and is invalid if it does; and

Whereas, Section 20-7-902(1), MCA, provides that "a school district may identify gifted and talented children and devise programs to serve them" and Rule 10.55.804 ARM mandates a gifted and talented children program in each school, thereby directly and clearly conflicting with the statute; and

Whereas, the Legislature has made a gifted and talented children program discretionary, at the choice of each local school board, the Legislature nonetheless affirms its support of gifted and talented education and encourages local school districts to identify gifted and talented students and design and implement programs that meet the needs of those students.

Be it enacted by the legislature of the State of Montana:

Section 1. Repealer. Rule .10. 55.804, ARM, is repealed.

Section 2 Effective Date. This Act is effective July 1, 1991.

The Board felt that it had the authority to promulgate the aforementioned rule pursuant to the Article X, Section 9(3)(a), of the Montana Constitution of 1972, which provides:

There is a board of public education to exercise general supervision over the public school system and such other public educational institutions as may be assigned by law. Other duties of the board shall be provided by law.

The Board brought the instant declaratory judgment action seeking a ruling as follows:

1. The legislative branch is not the sole law-making, or rule-making body under the Montana

Constitution. Rather, the Board of Public Education, in exercising its Art. X Sec. 9(3) powers of "general supervision" has constitutional rule-making authority. This provision is self-executing, and the authority granted is independent of any power that is "delegated" to the Board by the legislature.

2. The Board's accreditation standards, including the rule mandating gifted and talented programs, are within the purview of its Art. X Sec. 9(3), constitutional powers of "general supervision".
3. That House Bill 116 and/or 20-7-902 MCA, to the extent they interfere or conflict with the Board's constitutional rule-making are in violation of the separation of powers doctrine of Art. III Sec. 1 of the Montana Constitution and are therefore invalid and of no legal effect.

#### STANDARD OF REVIEW

Before reviewing the factual matter in particular, it would be helpful to review the standard that this Court will use in granting a motion for summary judgment. As all are aware, this Court cannot grant a motion for summary judgment if a genuine issue of material fact exists. Rule 56, M.R.Civ.P. Summary judgment encourages judicial economy through the elimination of unnecessary trial, delay, and expense. *Wagner v. Glasgow Livestock Sale Co.*, 222 Mont. 385, 389, 722 P.2d 1165, 1168 (1986); *Clarks Fork National Bank v. Papp*, 215 Mont. 494, 496, 698 P.2d 851, 852-853 (1985); *Bonawitz v. Bourke*, 173 Mont. 179, 182, 567 P.2d 32, 33 (1977).

Summary judgment, however, will only be granted when the record discloses no genuine issue of material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. See Rule 56(c), M.R.Civ.P.; *Cate v. Hargrave*, 209 Mont. 265, 269, 689 P.2d 952, 954 (1984). The movant has the initial burden to show that there is a complete absence of any genuine issue of material fact. To satisfy this burden, the movant must make a clear showing as to what the truth is so as to exclude any real doubt as to the existence of any genuine issue of material fact. *Kober & Kyriss v. Billings Deac. Hosp.*, 148 Mont. 117, 417 P.2d 476 (1966).

The opposing party must then come forward with substantial evidence that raises a genuine issue of material fact in order to defeat the motion. *Denny Driscoll Boys Home v. State*, 227 Mont. 177, 179, 737 P.2d 1150, 1151 (1987). Such motions, however, are clearly not favored. "[T]he procedure is never to be a substitute for trial if a factual controversy exists." *Reaves v. Reinbold*, 189 Mont. 284, 288, 615 P.2d 896, 898 (1980). If there is any doubt as to the propriety of a motion for summary judgment, it should be denied. *Rogers v. Swingley*, 206 Mont. 306, 670 P.2d 1386 (1983); *Cheyenne Western Bank v. Young*, 1 Mont. 492, 587587 P.2d 401 (1978); *Kober* at 122, 417 P.2d at 479.

Clearly, summary judgment is appropriate since there is no disputed question of fact, as has been acknowledged by both parties.

This Court is of the view that the Board's motion should be granted.

#### IMMUNITY

The parties have done a heroic effort of briefing the Court on the question of whether or not the Administrative Code Committee has immunity from the present action. This Court feels, however, that the immunity issue need not be addressed or decided in order to resolve this matter. The Court has before it the State of Montana as a defendant. Clearly, the Board is entitled to have House Bill 116 tested before a Court. Perhaps the Administrative Code Committee is not the appropriate defendant. Clearly, however, the State of Montana is an appropriate defendant in such an action. Thus, in order to avoid the question of whether or not the Administrative Code Committee is immune, the Court will dismiss the Administrative Code Committee from this suit. This, however, still leaves the question of whether or not House Bill 116 improperly interfered with the Board's constitutional authority.

#### CONSTITUTIONALITY OF H.B. 116

The Court has been directed to a West Virginia case that is very persuasive. See *West Virginia Board of Education vs. Hechler*, 376 S.E.2d 839 (West Virginia 1988). In that case, the Supreme Court of West Virginia noted that Article XII, Section 2, of the West Virginia State Constitution provided:

The general supervision of the free schools of the state shall be vested in the West Virginia Board of Education which shall perform such duties as may be prescribed by law. Id. at 842.

Pursuant to that Constitutional enactment, the West Virginia Board of Education adopted rules concerning design and equipment of school buses. The board filed their rule with the West Virginia secretary of state for publication. However, the secretary of state of West Virginia refused to file the rule because the Board had failed to first submit the rule to a legislative oversight committee. The West Virginia Supreme Court held that any attempt to impede rules proposed by the West Virginia Board of Education was not consistent with the general supervisory powers conferred upon the board by the West Virginia constitution.

The West Virginia court noted that state legislators, since they infrequently meet, cannot assume supervisory responsibility for public schools. In such cases, the supervision and administrative control over the state school system is placed in a State Board of Education. Decisions that pertain to education should be faced by those who possess expertise in the educational area. Id. at 842.

The West Virginia court noted that the Board of Education enjoyed a special standing due to its placement in the West Virginia Constitution. The Supreme Court of West Virginia held that the particular rule-making by the State Board of Education was within the meaning of general supervision of state schools as announced by the West Virginia Constitution, and that any statutory provision that interfered with such rule-making was unconstitutional. Id. at 843.

This is precisely the situation presented before this Court. In the first instance, the West Virginia constitutional provision in question in *Hechler* is very similar to Article X, Section 9(3), of the Montana Constitution. As in *Hechler*, we here have a situation where the Montana legislature is interfering with the rule-making authority of a constitutionally created Board of Education. This being the case, that statutory interference is unconstitutional.

The Montana Constitution provides:

The power of the government of this state is divided into three distinct branches--legislative, executive, and judicial. No person or persons charged with the exercise of power properly belonging to one branch shall exercise any power properly belonging to either of the others, except as in this constitution expressly directed or permitted. See Montana Constitution, Art. III, sec. 1.

This Court is cognizant of the fact that there must be balancing between the powers of the legislature and those of special boards created by Montana's Constitution. This balancing was discussed in detail in the case of *Board of Regents vs. Judge*, 168 Mont. 433, 543 P.2d 1323 (1975). However, in this case, this Court is convinced that the rule here in question, as adopted by the Board, is well within its constitutional prerogative to exercise general supervision over the public school system.

In its brief, the State of Montana has delved extensively into comments made by delegates to the 1972 constitutional convention. However, if the language of the Constitution is clear, it may not be ignored. Further, if the language is clear, its meaning is to be ascertained from the Constitution itself construing the language as written. This being the case, there is no occasion for construction since the language is plain and unambiguous. See *General Agriculture Corporation v. Moore*, 166 Mont. 510, 516, 534 P.2d 859 (1975).

Further, the State notes that the rule, as originally suggested by the Board, was allegedly drafted pursuant to statutory authority and not pursuant to the Constitution. Thus, argues the State, the Board cannot now seek to use the Constitution to support the passage of the rule. With this contention this Court cannot agree. The Board is a constitutionally recognized and created agency. As such, it is not subject to the usual administrative and legislative constraints to which the State refers. For example, it matters not that the Board may or may not have precisely complied with the Montana Administrative Procedure Act in adopting the rule in question. That Act is enacted by the legislature. As noted earlier, the legislature cannot interfere with other constitutionally created bodies that are properly conducting their business.

Further, the State points to the Attorney General's opinion contained at 44 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 4. However, that opinion expressly indicated that it was not dealing with any constitutional power of the Board.

The State exalts form over substance and would require the Board to perform a meaningless act. The State seems to be contending that one of the reasons this rule is invalid is that the Board did not follow precise administrative procedures. Thus, argues the Board, if the Board did follow these precise

administrative procedures, and indicated that the rule was not being adopted pursuant to a statute but pursuant to the Constitution, then perhaps the rule would be valid. This Court considers such a procedure to be a futile act. This Court will not require the Board to go through such a futile procedure. Perhaps that argument would be well taken if we were here dealing with a board or agency created by another branch of government. However, we are dealing with a constitutionally-empowered board.

Based on the above, the Court hereby enters its declaratory ruling as follows:

The Board of Public Education, pursuant to Article X, Section 9(3), of the Montana Constitution, is vested with constitutional rule-making authority. This provision is self-executing and independent of any power that is delegated to the Board by the legislature. The Board's rule mandating gifted and talented programs is within the purview of the Board's constitutional power of general supervision pursuant to Article X, Section 9(3), of the Montana Constitution. House Bill 116, to the extent that it interferes or conflicts with the Board's constitutional rule-making power, is in violation of the separation of powers doctrine of Article III, Section 1, of the Montana Constitution, and is therefore invalid and of no further force or effect.

DATED this day of March 1992.  
s/JUDGE SHERLOCK

pc: W. William Leaphart Eddy McClure  
Judy Browning

# Part One – Notice and Opportunity to Be Heard

## Montana Code Annotated 2023

**2-3-101. Legislative intent.** The legislature finds and declares pursuant to the mandate of Article II, section 8, of the 1972 Montana constitution that legislative guidelines should be established to secure to the people of Montana their constitutional right to be afforded reasonable opportunity to participate in the operation of governmental agencies prior to the final decision of the agency.

**History:** En. 82-4226 by Sec. 1, Ch. 491, L. 1975; R.C.M. 1947, 82-4226.

**2-3-102. Definitions.** As used in this part, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Agency" means any board, bureau, commission, department, authority, or officer of the state or local government authorized by law to make rules, determine contested cases, or enter into contracts except:

- (a) the legislature and any branch, committee, or officer thereof;
- (b) the judicial branches and any committee or officer thereof;
- (c) the governor, except that an agency is not exempt because the governor has been designated as a member thereof; or
- (d) the state military establishment and agencies concerned with civil defense and recovery from hostile attack.

(2) "Agency action" means the whole or a part of the adoption of an agency rule, the issuance of a license or order, the award of a contract, or the equivalent or denial thereof.

(3) "Rule" means any agency regulation, standard, or statement of general applicability that implements, interprets, or prescribes law or policy or describes the organization, procedures, or practice requirements of any agency. The term includes the amendment or repeal of a prior rule but does not include:

- (a) statements concerning only the internal management of an agency and not affecting private rights or procedures available to the public; or
- (b) declaratory rulings as to the applicability of any statutory provision or of any rule.

**History:** En. 82-4227 by Sec. 2, Ch. 491, L. 1975; amd. Sec. 23, Ch. 285, L. 1977; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 452, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-4227(part); amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 243, L. 1979.

**2-3-103. Public participation -- governor to ensure guidelines adopted -- procedures for publishing notice.** (1) (a) Each agency shall develop procedures for permitting and encouraging the public to participate in agency decisions that are of significant interest to the public. The procedures must ensure adequate notice and assist public participation before a final agency action is taken that is of significant interest to the public.

(b) The agency shall publish an agenda for a meeting, as defined in **2-3-202**, as follows:

(i) if a newspaper of general circulation in the county where the agency is located publishes electronic notices and links to meeting agendas free of charge to the agency on the newspaper's website, the agency shall provide the notice and agenda to the newspaper to post on the newspaper's website;

(ii) if the agency does not have an option to post notices and links to meeting agendas free of charge, the agency shall provide adequate notice of a meeting by doing at least one of the following:

- (A) posting a link to the meeting agenda on the agency's primary website; or
- (B) posting the agenda on the social media site of the agency.

(c) The agenda must include an item allowing public comment on any public matter that is not on the agenda of the meeting and that is within the jurisdiction of the agency conducting the meeting. However,

the agency may not take action on any matter discussed unless specific notice of that matter is included on an agenda and public comment has been allowed on that matter.

(d) Public comment received at a meeting must be incorporated into the official minutes of the meeting, as provided in **2-3-212**.

(e) For purposes of this section, "public matter" does not include contested case and other adjudicative proceedings.

(2) The governor shall ensure that each board, bureau, commission, department, authority, agency, or officer of the executive branch of the state adopts coordinated rules for its programs. The guidelines must provide policies and procedures to facilitate public participation in those programs, consistent with subsection (1). These guidelines must be adopted as rules and published in a manner so that the rules may be provided to a member of the public upon request.

**History:** En. 82-4228 by Sec. 3, Ch. 491, L. 1975; amd. Sec. 24, Ch. 285, L. 1977; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 452, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-4228(1), (5); amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 425, L. 2003; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 396, L. 2023.

**2-3-104. Requirements for compliance with notice provisions.** An agency shall be considered to have complied with the notice provisions of **2-3-103** if:

(1) an environmental impact statement is prepared and distributed as required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Title 75, chapter 1;

(2) a proceeding is held as required by the Montana Administrative Procedure Act;

(3) a public hearing, after appropriate notice is given, is held pursuant to any other provision of state law or a local ordinance or resolution; or

(4) a newspaper of general circulation within the area to be affected by a decision of significant interest to the public has carried a news story or advertisement concerning the decision sufficiently prior to a final decision to permit public comment on the matter.

**History:** En. 82-4228 by Sec. 3, Ch. 491, L. 1975; amd. Sec. 24, Ch. 285, L. 1977; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 452, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-4228(2).

**2-3-105. Supplemental notice by radio or television.** (1) An official of the state or any of its political subdivisions who is required by law to publish a notice required by law may supplement the publication by a radio or television broadcast of a summary of the notice or by both when in the official's judgment the public interest will be served.

(2) The summary of the notice must be read without a reference to any person by name who is then a candidate for political office.

(3) The announcements may be made only by duly employed personnel of the station from which the broadcast emanates.

(4) Announcements by political subdivisions may be made only by stations situated within the county of origin of the legal notice unless a broadcast station does not exist in that county, in which case announcements may be made by a station or stations situated in any county other than the county of origin of the legal notice.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 149, L. 1963; R.C.M. 1947, 19-201; amd. Sec. 38, Ch. 61, L. 2007.

**2-3-106. Period for which copy retained.** Each radio or television station broadcasting any summary of a legal notice shall for a period of 6 months subsequent to such broadcast retain at its office a copy or transcription of the text of the summary as actually broadcast, which shall be available for public inspection.

**History:** En. Sec. 2, Ch. 149, L. 1963; R.C.M. 1947, 19-202.

**2-3-107. Proof of publication by broadcast.** Proof of publication of a summary of any notice by radio or television broadcast shall be by affidavit of the manager, an assistant manager, or a program director of the radio or television station broadcasting the same.

**History:** En. Sec. 3, Ch. 149, L. 1963; R.C.M. 1947, 19-203.

**2-3-111. Opportunity to submit views -- public hearings.** (1) Procedures for assisting public participation must include a method of affording interested persons reasonable opportunity to submit data, views, or arguments, orally or in written form, prior to making a final decision that is of significant interest to the public.

(2) When a state agency other than the board of regents proposes to take an action that directly impacts a specific community or area and a public hearing is held, the hearing must be held in an accessible facility in the impacted community or area or in the nearest community or area with an accessible facility.

**History:** En. 82-4228 by Sec. 3, Ch. 491, L. 1975; amd. Sec. 24, Ch. 285, L. 1977; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 452, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-4228(3); amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 487, L. 1997.

**2-3-112. Exceptions.** The provisions of 2-3-103 and 2-3-111 do not apply to:

(1) an agency decision that must be made to deal with an emergency situation affecting the public health, welfare, or safety;

(2) an agency decision that must be made to maintain or protect the interests of the agency, including but not limited to the filing of a lawsuit in a court of law or becoming a party to an administrative proceeding; or

(3) a decision involving no more than a ministerial act.

**History:** En. 82-4228 by Sec. 3, Ch. 491, L. 1975; amd. Sec. 24, Ch. 285, L. 1977; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 452, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-4228(4).

**2-3-113. Declaratory rulings to be published.** The declaratory rulings of any board, bureau, commission, department, authority, agency, or officer of the state which is not subject to the Montana Administrative Procedure Act shall be published and be subject to judicial review as provided under 2-4-623(6) and 2-4-501, respectively.

**History:** En. 82-4227 by Sec. 2, Ch. 491, L. 1975; amd. Sec. 23, Ch. 285, L. 1977; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 452, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-4227(part); amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 184, L. 1979.

**2-3-114. Enforcement -- attorney fees.** (1) The district courts of the state have jurisdiction to set aside an agency decision under this part upon petition of any person whose rights have been prejudiced. A petition pursuant to this section must be filed within 30 days of the date on which the person learns, or reasonably should have learned, of the agency's decision.

(2) A person alleging a deprivation of rights who prevails in an action brought in district court to enforce the person's rights under Article II, section 8, of the Montana constitution may be awarded costs and reasonable attorney fees.

**History:** En. 82-4229 by Sec. 4, Ch. 491, L. 1975; amd. Sec. 25, Ch. 285, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-4229; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 211, L. 2007; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 266, L. 2015.

# Part Two – Open Meetings

## Montana Code Annotated 2023

**2-3-201. Legislative intent -- liberal construction.** The legislature finds and declares that public boards, commissions, councils, and other public agencies in this state exist to aid in the conduct of the peoples' business. It is the intent of this part that actions and deliberations of all public agencies shall be conducted openly. The people of the state do not wish to abdicate their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. Toward these ends, the provisions of the part shall be liberally construed.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 159, L. 1963; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3401.

**2-3-202. Meeting defined.** As used in this part, "meeting" means the convening of a quorum of the constituent membership of a public agency or association described in **2-3-203**, whether corporal or by means of electronic equipment, to hear, discuss, or act upon a matter over which the agency has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power.

**History:** En. 82-3404 by Sec. 2, Ch. 567, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3404; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 183, L. 1987

**2-3-203. Meetings of public agencies and certain associations of public agencies to be open to public -- exceptions.** (1) All meetings of public or governmental bodies, boards, bureaus, commissions, agencies of the state, or any political subdivision of the state or organizations or agencies supported in whole or in part by public funds or expending public funds, including the supreme court, must be open to the public.

(2) All meetings of associations that are composed of public or governmental bodies referred to in subsection (1) and that regulate the rights, duties, or privileges of any individual must be open to the public.

(3) The presiding officer of any meeting may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy and then if and only if the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains and, in that event, the meeting must be open.

(4) (a) Except as provided in subsection (4)(b), a meeting may be closed to discuss a strategy to be followed with respect to litigation when an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public agency.

(b) A meeting may not be closed to discuss strategy to be followed in litigation in which the only parties are public bodies or associations described in subsections (1) and (2).

(5) The supreme court may close a meeting that involves judicial deliberations in an adversarial proceeding.

(6) Any committee or subcommittee appointed by a public body or an association described in subsection (2) for the purpose of conducting business that is within the jurisdiction of that agency is subject to the requirements of this section.

**History:** En. Sec. 2, Ch. 159, L. 1963; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 474, L. 1975; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 567, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3402; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 380, L. 1979; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 183, L. 1987; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 123, L. 1993; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 218, L. 2005.

**2-3-211. Recording.** A person may not be excluded from any open meeting under this part and may not be prohibited from photographing, televising, transmitting images or audio by electronic or digital means, or recording open meetings. The presiding officer may ensure that these activities do not interfere with the conduct of the meeting.

**History:** En. 82-3405 by Sec. 4, Ch. 567, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3405; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 138, L. 2017.

**2-3-212. Minutes of meetings -- public inspection.** (1) Appropriate minutes of all meetings required by 2-3-203 to be open must be kept and must be available for inspection by the public. If an audio recording of a meeting is made and designated as official, the recording constitutes the official record of the meeting. If an official recording is made, a written record of the meeting must also be made and must include the information specified in subsection (2).

(2) Minutes must include without limitation:

(a) the date, time, and place of the meeting;

(b) a list of the individual members of the public body, agency, or organization who were in attendance;

(c) the substance of all matters proposed, discussed, or decided; and

(d) at the request of any member, a record of votes by individual members for any votes taken.

(3) If the minutes are recorded and designated as the official record, a log or time stamp for each main agenda item is required for the purpose of providing assistance to the public in accessing that portion of the meeting.

(4) Any time a presiding officer closes a public meeting pursuant to 2-3-203, the presiding officer shall ensure that minutes taken in compliance with subsection (2) are kept of the closed portion of the meeting. The minutes from the closed portion of the meeting may not be made available for inspection except pursuant to a court order.

**History:** En. Sec. 3, Ch. 159, L. 1963; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 567, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3403; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 65, L. 2011; amd. Sec. 29, Ch. 348, L. 2015.

**2-3-213. Voidability.** Any decision made in violation of 2-3-203 may be declared void by a district court having jurisdiction. A suit to void a decision must be commenced within 30 days of the date on which the plaintiff or petitioner learns, or reasonably should have learned, of the agency's decision.

**History:** En. 82-3406 by Sec. 5, Ch. 567, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3406; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 211, L. 2007.

**2-3-214. Recording of meetings for certain boards.** (1) Except as provided in 2-3-203 and subsection (6) of this section, the following boards shall record their public meetings in an audio and video format:

(a) the board of investments provided for in 2-15-1808;

(b) the public employees' retirement board provided for in 2-15-1009;

(c) the teachers' retirement board provided for in 2-15-1010;

(d) the board of public education provided for in Article X, section 9, of the Montana constitution;

(e) the board of regents of higher education provided for in Article X, section 9, of the Montana constitution;

(f) except as provided in subsection (7)(a), the governing board of a county provided for in Title 7, chapter 1, part 21;

(g) except as provided in subsection (7)(b), the governing board of a first-class and second-class city

provided for in Title 7, chapter 1, part 41;

(h) a first-class or second-class school district board of trustees provided for in Article X, section 8, of the Montana constitution, **20-6-201**, and **20-6-301**; and

(i) a local board of health provided for in Title 50, chapter 2, part 1.

(2) (a) The boards listed in subsections (1)(a) through (1)(e) shall make the audio and video recordings of meetings under subsection (1) publicly available within 1 business day after the meeting through broadcast on the state government broadcasting service as provided in **5-11-1111** or through publication of streaming audio and video content on the respective board's website.

(b) The boards listed in subsections (1)(f) through (1)(i) shall make the audio and video recordings publicly available within 5 business days after the meeting with a link to the recording on the respective board's website. If the board does not maintain a website, it shall maintain a social media page and provide a link to the recording on the social media page.

(c) The department of administration may develop a memorandum of understanding with the legislative services division for broadcasting executive branch content on the state government broadcasting service or live-streaming audio or video executive branch content over the internet.

(3) For the boards listed in subsections (1)(f) through (1)(i) that maintain minutes as required by **2-3-212**, the audio and video recordings created pursuant to this section are not required to be the official record of the meeting. If a recording is not designated as the official record, the recording may be destroyed after being retained online for 1 year and is not subject to the requirements of Title 2, chapter 6, for public information requests.

(4) A board is not required to disrupt or reschedule a meeting if there is a technological failure of the meeting recording. If the recording is not able to be made available online, the board shall prominently post a notice in the same manner as a notice of a public meeting and shall post a notice at all locations where the meeting recording links are available. The notice must explain the reason the meeting was not recorded and describe the steps taken to remedy the failure prior to the next meeting.

(5) The requirements of this section apply only when a board is acting on a matter over which the board has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power at a public meeting as defined in **2-3-202** that has been publicly noticed as required by **2-3-103**.

(6) The requirements of this section do not apply to a board listed in subsection (1)(f) when a quorum is incidentally established as described in **7-5-2122**(4) and (5) solely on the basis of sharing a common office space.

(7) The following boards must meet the requirements of this section, except that meetings may be recorded, retained, and made available in audio format only:

(a) the governing board of a county with a population of less than 4,500; and

(b) the governing board of a third-class city.

(8) Expenditures by a school district on staff, consultants, equipment, software licenses, storage, or security made to fulfill the requirements of this section qualify as a school facility project under **20-9-525**.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 133, L. 2015; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 741, L. 2023.

**2-3-221. Costs to prevailing party in certain actions to enforce constitutional right to know.** A person alleging a deprivation of rights who prevails in an action brought in district court to enforce the person's rights under Article II, section 9, of the Montana constitution may be awarded costs and reasonable attorney fees.

**History:** En. 93-8632 by Sec. 1, Ch. 493, L. 1975; R.C.M. 1947, 93-8632; amd. Sec. 39, Ch. 61, L. 2007; amd. Sec. 30, Ch. 348, L. 2015.

# Part Three – Use of Electronic Mail Systems

## Montana Code Annotated 2019

**2-3-301. Agency to accept public comment electronically -- dissemination of electronic mail address and documents required -- fees prohibited.** (1) An agency that accepts public comment pursuant to a statute, administrative rule, or policy, including an agency adopting rules pursuant to the Montana Administrative Procedure Act or an agency to which **2-3-111** applies, shall provide for the receipt of public comment by the agency by use of an electronic mail system.

(2) As part of the agency action required by subsection (1), an agency shall disseminate by appropriate media its electronic mail address to which public comment may be made, including dissemination in:

- (a) rulemaking notices published pursuant to the Montana Administrative Procedure Act;
- (b) the telephone directory of state agencies published by the department of administration;
- (c) any notice of agency existence, purpose, and operations published on the internet; or
- (d) any combination of the methods of dissemination provided in subsections (2)(a) through (2)(c).

(3) An agency shall, at the request of another agency or person and subject to **2-6-1003**, disseminate the electronic documents to that agency or person by electronic mail in place of surface mail. Notification of the availability of an electronic notice of proposed rulemaking may be sent to an interested person as provided in **2-4-302(2)(a)(ii)**. An agency may not charge a fee for providing documents by electronic mail in accordance with this subsection.

(4) An agency that receives electronic mail pursuant to subsection (1) shall retain the electronic mail as either an electronic or a paper copy to the same extent that other comments are retained.

(5) As used in this section, "agency" means a department, division, bureau, office, board, commission, authority, or other agency of the executive branch of state government.

**History:** En. Sec. 1, Ch. 484, L. 1999; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 77, L. 2001; amd. Sec. 19, Ch. 313, L. 2001; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 41, L. 2011; amd. Sec. 31, Ch. 348, L. 2015.

# **Travel Information**

## TRAVEL GUIDE

### **Meals:**

Must have traveled for more than 3 continuous hours and be a distance of at least 15 miles from headquarters or home, whichever is closer. (ARM 2.4.126)

A maximum of 2 meals during the travel shift. A travel shift is defined as that period of time beginning 1 hour before or terminated more than 1 hour after normally assigned work shift. (ARM 2.4.127)

Time ranges – Must have traveled for more than 3 continuous hours within one of the following time ranges: (ARM 2.4.128)

<b>Travel Time:</b>	<b>In-State</b>	<b>Out-of-State</b>
Three hours or less	None	None

Greater than 3 hours and at least 3 hours within the ranges below:

Morning (12:01AM – 10:00AM)	\$11.20	\$13.00
Midday (10:01AM – 3:00PM)	\$13.30	\$15.00
Evening (3:01PM – 12:00PM)	\$19.60	\$26.00
Daily Total	\$44.10	\$54.00

Only 1 meal per day when travel is performed solely within the confines of a travel shift. (ARM 2.4.130)

Two meals per 24-hour calendar day when departing within the travel shift but returning outside the limits or departing prior to travel shift and returning during travel shift. (ARM 2.4.130)

### **Mileage:**

The reimbursement rate for mileage driven in connection with State business is 65.5 cents per mile. To claim reimbursement at this rate the employee must qualify according to ARM 2.4.114. Total mileage will be determined by Board policy.

## **Reimbursement Information**

This is a handy reminder of what items need to be included in this packet. If all the information is included in your folder at the end of the meeting, there shouldn't be any delays in your reimbursement.

- **Travel Expense Voucher**—You **NEED** to sign and date this form.
- **Travel Detail Form**—Please fill out **everything** on this form.
- **Motel and/or Airline Receipt**—Reimbursement **cannot** be made without the receipt in our office.

*Thanks so much!*

**MONTANA BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION  
TRAVEL DETAILS**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ FROM \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_

DEPARTING\* \_\_\_\_\_ TIME ARRIVING\* \_\_\_\_\_

MODE OF TRAVEL \_\_\_\_\_

MILEAGE TRAVELED \_\_\_\_\_

---

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ FROM \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_

TIME DEPARTING\* \_\_\_\_\_ TIME ARRIVING\* \_\_\_\_\_

MODE OF TRAVEL \_\_\_\_\_

MILEAGE TRAVELED \_\_\_\_\_

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OTHER DETAILS PERTINENT TO REIMBURSEMENT:

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**\*APPROXIMATE TIME**

1. Please submit this form along with your Motel/Hotel receipt and signed travel vouchers to the Council secretary before you leave.
2. If you are submitting your travel claim separately or have done travel other than the Board meetings, please be sure to submit your claim within a 10-day time period.
3. If you are traveling and will complete your travel before June 30th of any year, you must have the travel claim turned in before June 30th.
4. Any travel performed before June 30th and not submitted before July 1st CANNOT BE REIMBURSED DUE TO FISCAL YEAR ENDING.
5. If you have any questions, please call the Board Secretary at 444-6576.



**Montana School for  
the Deaf and Blind  
Foundation**

**MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND  
FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES**



**Todd Carmichael—President**

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Cell: 406-750-8077  
[tcarr76@hotmail.com](mailto:tcarr76@hotmail.com)

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**Member Years: 2017-20226**

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**Member Years: 2022-20226**

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**Member Years: 2022-Present**

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**Cathy Copeland**

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**Vena Dagnall**

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**Kevin Eckhardt**

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**Dee Dee Franzen-Wallem**

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**Member Years: 2022-2025**

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**Lisa Schmidt**  
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**AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE  
MONTANA BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION  
AND THE  
MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND FOUNDATION, INC**

This agreement ("Agreement") is entered into by the Montana Board of Public Education ("Board") and the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind Foundation, Inc. ("Foundation"), a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Montana.

**RECITALS**

WHEREAS, the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind ("School") is an independent institution under the general supervision, direction and control of the Board as described in § 20-8-101, MCA; and

WHEREAS, the Foundation is a private, nonprofit corporation organized for the purpose of benefiting children and youths who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired and deaf blind and who are, or have been, students of the School; and

WHEREAS, the Foundation is an independent corporation whose relationship to the Board and the School is described in this Agreement, the Articles of Incorporation of the Foundation, the Bylaws of the Foundation, and ARM 10.59.101 through 104; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to § 20-8-111, MCA, the Board has the authority, through a contract with a nonprofit corporation, to designate to said nonprofit corporation the power to receive, hold, manage, use, and dispose of real and personal property transferred to the Board or to the State of Montana by purchase, gift, devise, or bequest or otherwise acquired and the proceeds, interest, and income of the property for the use and benefit of the School; and

WHEREAS, the Board and the Foundation wish to enter into this Agreement in order to make the Foundation its designee as described in § 20-8-111, MCA, and in order to establish the relative duties and responsibilities of the parties.

NOW THEREFORE, based upon the above recitals and the mutual agreements contained in this Agreement, the parties agree as follows:

**I. Designation of Foundation.**

Pursuant to § 20-8-111, MCA, the Board hereby engages the Foundation to render, and the Foundation agrees to render to the Board, the receipt holding, management, use and disposal of all real and personal property transferred to the Board or to the State of Montana by purchase, gift, devise, bequest or otherwise, and the proceeds, interest, and income thereof for the use and benefit of the students and programs of the School.

**II. Articles of Incorporation.**

The Foundation agrees that it shall maintain articles of incorporation which include the following provisions:

- A. The Superintendent of the School shall by virtue of his or her office be one of the members of the Foundation's Board of Directors until his or her successor is duly appointed.

- B. The Superintendent of the School, as a member of the Foundation Board, will present a quarterly report to the Board that would include a budget summary and minutes of Foundation meetings held.

**III. Foundation Bylaws.**

The Foundation agrees that it shall maintain bylaws which without limitation cover selection of officers, meetings, compensation for services and amendment procedures.

**IV. Foundation Duties and Responsibilities.**

- A. The Foundation shall receive, hold, manage, use and dispose of real and personal property made or transferred to the Board or to the State of Montana by purchase, gift, devise, bequest or otherwise acquired, and the proceeds, interest and income for the use and benefit of the students and former students of the School and other students served by the School.
- B. The Foundation shall annually review the Agreement and make recommendations to the Board at a regularly scheduled meeting.
- C. In fulfilling its responsibilities under this Agreement and § 20-8-111, MCA, the Foundation agrees that it will:
  - 1. Comply with applicable state and federal law;
  - 2. Maintain financial and accounting records in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, conduct a review performed by a certified public accountant at least once every two years, and provide the Board with a copy of the most recent financial statement;
  - 3. Provide the legislative auditor access to records as may be necessary to comply with the requirements of § 18-1-118, MCA, except that financial records of private donors are confidential and shall not be released or accessed by the public unless required by law; and
  - 4. Establish and maintain a written policy covering the acceptance, management, disposal or expenditure of income, proceeds, interest and property managed by the Foundation pursuant to this Agreement.

**V. Relationship Between Foundation and Board.**

- A. The Board recognizes that the Foundation is a private, nonprofit organization independent of the Board.
- B. The Board agrees to encourage and maintain the independence of the Foundation, while fostering a cooperative relationship between the Board and the Foundation.
- C. The Foundation agrees to cooperate with the Board in fulfilling the Foundation's purposes as defined in its articles of incorporation and in complying with its responsibilities under this Agreement.

**VI. Liability Exposure.**

The parties agree that the liability of the Board, its officials and employees, is controlled and limited by the provisions of Title 2, Chap. 9, MCA. Any provisions of this Agreement shall be controlled, limited, and otherwise modified to limit any liability of the State of Montana and the Board to that set forth in Title 2, Chap. 9, MCA.

**VII. Indemnification.**

Each party agrees to be responsible and assume liability for its own wrongful or negligent acts or omissions, or those of its officers, agents or employees, to the full extent required by law. Each party agrees to maintain reasonable coverage for such liabilities either through commercial insurance or a reasonable self-insurance mechanism, and the terms of such insurance coverage or self-insurance mechanism shall be provided to the other party upon request.

**VIII. Term of Agreement; Entire Agreement.**

This Agreement shall begin on the date of its execution by both parties and shall continue until terminated by either party as provided in this Agreement or until superseded by a subsequent agreement between the parties. This Agreement shall be considered the sole and entire Agreement between the parties and shall supersede and replace all pre-existing agreements between the parties.

**IX. Termination.**

This Agreement may be terminated at any time by the mutual written consent of the parties or upon sixty (60) days written notice by one party to the other.

**X. Dissolution.**

If the Foundation's corporate structure is dissolved, the board of directors of the Foundation shall dispose of all assets of the Foundation in accordance with the laws of the State of Montana and the terms of its articles of incorporation and Bylaws. Any assets not so disposed of shall, to the extent allowed by law, be transferred to the Board.

**XI. Amendments.**

This Agreement may be modified by written amendments signed by authorized representatives of both parties.

**XII. Disputes and Venue.**

This Agreement is governed by the laws of the State of Montana. The parties agree that any litigation concerning this Agreement must be brought in the First Judicial District Court in and for the County of Lewis and Clark, State of Montana. Each party shall pay its own costs and attorney fees.

The following persons, being duly authorized to sign this Agreement and bind the above-named parties, do hereby execute this Agreement on the date shown below.

MONTANA SCHOOL FOR THE  
DEAF AND THE BLIND FOUNDATION, INC

BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

  
Todd Carmichael  
President

  
Dr. Tim Tharp  
Chair

Date: July 23, 2025

Date: 7/23/25

## **MSDB Foundation**

***Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.***

**- Helen Keller**

The MSDB Foundation provides Montana's deaf and blind children with opportunities for academic and social development similar to those of other children, in order to better prepare them for independent lives.

With the help of many generous donors, the Foundation has funded a large technology program that brought the School into the 21st century, an updated and automated library with an expanded collection, a playground accessible for children with vision or hearing loss, and many programs that directly benefit MSDB students.

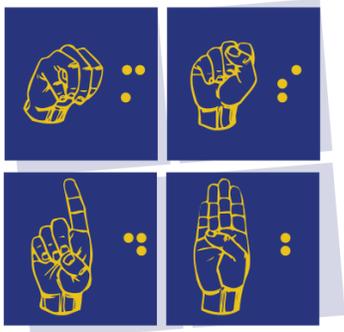
The MSDB Foundation provides ongoing support for:

- job training and career preparation
- assistive technology
- outreach services for students in their home communities
- capital improvements on campus

Each year, the Foundation supports a wide range of academic and extracurricular activities that improve the students' self confidence, quality of life, and education. These include:

- MSDB's Academic Bowl team
- Visually Impaired Games
- Summer camps for kids from across the state
- Family Learning Weekends
- Academic achievement awards
- Field trips
- Holiday parties, proms, and a yearbook
- Expressions of Silence – a performing group of students who use sign language choreographed to recorded music to “sing” songs for audiences at various events.

**Montana School  
for the Deaf and  
Blind  
(MSDB)**



# MONTANA SCHOOL *for the Deaf & the Blind*

MSDB's professional team of teachers and specialists has been highly trained to meet the specific educational needs of students with vision or hearing loss. The majority of the School's teachers have advanced degrees in the education of the deaf or the education of the blind, and their expertise is matched by their passion for their work.

Working in collaboration with the experienced and caring teachers, outreach consultants, and interpreters are two audiologists, a speech pathologist, transition specialist, orientation and mobility specialist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, guidance counselor, behavior specialist, and a school psychologist. The residential cottage attendants are trained and certified under the Residential Child and Youth Care Professional Program.

This dedicated staff of experts is committed to providing the best educational experiences to their students. The staff is led by an administrative team consisting of a Superintendent, Principal, Director of Student Services, Director of Outreach, and Business Manager.

## **Administration**

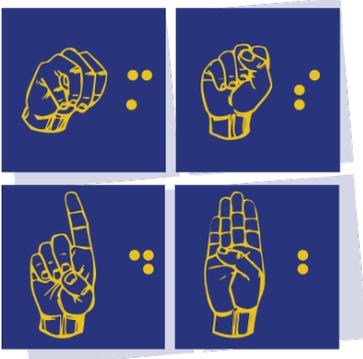
Superintendent.....Paul Furthmyre  
Director of Student Services .....Jim Kelly  
Director of Outreach .....Miranda Briggs  
Business Manager .....Donna Schmidt  
Principal.....Julie-Dee Alt

## **Department Supervisors**

Maintenance Supervisor .....Alex Sebik  
Infirmary Supervisor.....April Spanbauer  
Kitchen Supervisor.....Bobbi Fritz

## **Non-Instructional Specialists**

School Psychologist .....OPEN  
Behavior Specialist .....Yvette Smail  
Orientation & Mobility Specialist.....Geri Darko  
Occupational Therapist .....Stephanie Annis  
Transition Specialist .....Sheri Devlin  
Guidance Counselor .....Trudy Hill  
Audiologist.....Dr. Katie Lynch and Lisa Cannon  
Speech Pathologist .....Sherri Widhalm  
Physical Therapist.....Laurie McRae



# MONTANA SCHOOL *for the Deaf & the Blind*

## Mission, Vision, and History

### Mission

To foster the learning and growth of the whole-child with a hearing and/or vision loss, preparing them to become successful citizens.

### Vision

To be Montana's leading resource for the stakeholders of MSDB by providing supports & services that empower individuals to attain their highest potential.

### Belief Statement

All children are capable and confident and will receive an education through the whole-child education philosophy, which includes sensory specific access to communication and curriculum in safe learning & living environments.



## History



First MSDB School in Boulder — 1893-1895

1893 – The State Deaf and Dumb School was opened. The first school building was a leased two-story frame house with no electricity and no running water. The school opened on September 1st. In December, the school added the Blind Department. At the end of this school year, there were 4 deaf students, 4 blind students, and two 'feeble-minded' students.

1895 – The School moved to a store as the lease on the house expired after two years. The School remained at the store for three years.

1898 – Due to requirements of a land grant, the name of the school was changed to Montana Deaf and Dumb Asylum. The School moved to the permanent location in May. However, during the next winter, the heating system failed and the winter was severe. The dormitories were at 0° and it was -25° outside.

1901 – The School graduated the first 'deaf and dumb' pupil and the first blind pupil – the first ones in the state of Montana.

1901 – The publication of the Rocky Mountain Leader made its first appearance on November 1st. The Leader had three purposes 1 – teach the art of printing to the boys, 2 – increase literacy work done in the classrooms, and 3 – inform parents and guardians about the work of the school. The final edition was in May, 1972.

1902 – In December, the Board of Education endorsed a name change to ‘School for the Deaf and Blind.’ The name change becomes effective in 1903.

1904 – The School had so many students that a new wing had to be added to the building as well as a new boiler system.

1909 – Legislation was passed so that ‘feeble-minded’ people could remain at the school for the rest of their lives. This population grew quickly and the deaf people were concerned and wanted to separate the schools.

1922-1934 – The battle continued to separate the schools. On January 20, 1934, the legislature agreed to segregate the schools for the deaf and blind from the school for the ‘feeble-minded.’ The city of Great Falls donated 10 acres of land for the new school.

1937 – On October 11th, the new MSDB opened in Great Falls, and it was formally dedicated on November 1st. The School had 82 pupils in the deaf department and 22 pupils in the blind department. Instruction for deaf students was oral. Sign language could be used after school and for chapel services.

1942 – The dog, Shep, was killed in an accident and Ed Shields, a train conductor, wrote and sold small books called Shep, the Dog That Was Forever Faithful. Proceeds from this book were given to the children at MSDB for recreation and for playground equipment.

1943 – Legislature approved the official name to be Montana State School for the Deaf and the Blind. They also placed the school under the direction of the State Board of Education and with a local executive board. The local board was discontinued in 1972.

1964 – The Rochester Method of instruction was adopted for deaf students.

1972 – Total Communication was adopted as the instructional method for deaf students.

1981 – Money from the Shep fund and from other donors were combined to create the MSDB Foundation Fund.

1983 – Cottages, dining facilities to connect the cottages, and a physical education facility were built and ready for occupancy.

1984 – The old dormitory building, affectionately known as the Butter Building, was razed. The granite marker was removed from the building and is on the current MSDB campus.

