

BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

September 11-12, 2025
Dillon Elementary School, Boardroom
22 North Cotton Drive
Dillon, MT

Thursday, September 11, 2025
8:30AM

CALL TO ORDER – 00:00:00

Chair Tim Tharp called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. The Board held a moment of silence in remembrance of September 11, 2001. The Chair led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance, Ms. Kris Stockton took Roll Call, and the Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests.

Board members: Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair; Dr. Ron Slinger, Vice Chair; Ms. Madalyn Quinlan; Dr. Hannah Nieskens; Ms. Lisa Schmidt; Ms. Julia Maxwell; Ms. Renee Rasmussen, Ms. Lydia Comstock, Student Representative. Ex Officio members: State Superintendent Susie Hedalen, Office of Public Instruction (OPI); Dr. Angela McLean, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE). Staff: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Ms. Julie Balsam, Administrative Assistant; Ms. Cathy Kincheloe, Director of Planning, Community Choice Schools Commission. Guests: Superintendent Paul Furthmyre, Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB); Dr. Jason Neiffer, Montana Digital Academy (MTDA); Ms. Kristi Steinberg, University of Montana (UM); Ms. Kim Popham, Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE); Ms. Tyler Capece, OPI; Ms. Christy Mock Stutz, OPI; Deputy Superintendent Craig Barringer, OPI; Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI; Mr. Patrick Cates, OPI; Superintendent Randy Shipman, Dillon Elementary School; Superintendent Josh Patterson, Beaverhead County High School; Superintendent Wes Young, Lustre Christian High School; Ms. Miranda Briggs, MSDB; Mr. JP Plutt, Dillon Tribune.

PUBLIC COMMENT – 00:02:44
No public comment was made.

CONSENT AGENDA – 00:02:52

Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

ADOPT AGENDA - 00:03:15

Board member Rasmussen moved to approve the agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Quinlan.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

❖ REPORTS – Dr. Tim Tharp (Items 1-5)

Item 1 CHAIRPERSON REPORT – 00:03:43 **Dr. Tim Tharp**

Superintendent Randy Shipman and Superintendent Josh Patterson gave opening remarks and welcomed the Board to Dillon.

Chair Tim Tharp discussed meetings and events he has attended since the July 2025 Board meeting, then reviewed the Committee Assignments document and the Action items in the agenda packet for Board approval.

Chair Tharp moved to approve the Board of Public Education Bylaws as presented.
Motion seconded by Board member Quinlan.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Tharp moved to approve the 2026 Board of Public Education Meeting Calendar and Agenda as presented. **Motion seconded by Board member Nieskens.**

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. McCall Flynn discussed the revisions to the Strategic Plan made at the July 2025 Board Meeting.

Chair Tharp moved to approve the 2025-2026 Board of Public Education Strategic Plan as presented. **Motion seconded by Board member Maxwell.**

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Item 2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT – 00:26:40**
McCall Flynn

Ms. McCall Flynn reviewed the timeline for revisions to the Strategic Plan that will take place over the course of the next year, asked for input, and answered Board members' questions. Ms. Flynn announced the hiring of Lea Ann Munkres as the new Program Officer for the Public Charter School Program.

Item 3 **STATE SUPERINTENDENT REPORT – 00:47:52**
State Superintendent Susie Hedalen

Superintendent Susie Hedalen discussed Federal funding distributions and announced that OPI has received all Federal Funding to date. Superintendent Hedalen discussed revisions to the Federal Report Card, provided an update on the Accountability System, shared information on a MAST survey sent to schools, updated the Board on work with OCHE on the Future Ready Indicators, reviewed the OPI Organizational Chart, and discussed legislative implementation.

Annual Special Education Report: Mr. Patrick Cates presented the Annual Special Education Report to the Board. Mr. Cates highlighted specific areas of the report and answered Board members' questions.

Item 4 **COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT – 01:45:07**
Dr. Angela McLean

Dr. Angela McLean discussed the Rural Talent Development Grant, announced the Montana's Future at Work Grantees and the Montana Grow Your Own Educator Awardees, reviewed the Future Ready Indicator work with OPI, and discussed the College Access Arc of Events that included dates for FAFSA completion and College Application Week. Dr. McLean concluded her report with an announcement of an ACT Report Code students can enter on their ACT application which allows their scores to be sent to all Montana University System campuses. Dr. McLean answered Board members' questions.

Item 5 **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT – 02:05:27**
Lydia Comstock

Ms. Lydia Comstock discussed cell phone policies schools have implemented and noted that student and teacher feedback has been positive. Ms. Comstock reported on a presentation by the Montana World Affairs Council at Hays-Lodgepole High School, noted Suicide Prevention Week September 7-13, 2025, announced Sheridan High School as the newest member of the Montana Association of Student Councils (MASC), discussed middle school engagement MASC is doing, and reviewed the upcoming annual MASC conference November 16-18, 2025 in Great Falls. Ms. Comstock discussed her attendance at a National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) New Member Institute Virtual Conference for Student Representatives and answered Board members' questions.

❖ MSDB COMMITTEE – Lisa Schmidt (Item 6)

Item 6 **MSDB REPORT – 02:16:59**
Superintendent Paul Furthmyre

Superintendent Paul Furthmyre presented the MSDB Personnel Action request for Board approval, reviewed school staffing, and provided a budget update. Outreach Director Miranda Briggs presented an update on the Outreach Program, and Superintendent Furthmyre and Ms. Briggs answered Board members' questions.

Board member Schmidt moved to approve the MSDB Personnel Action Items as presented in the agenda packet. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Furthmyre expressed his appreciation to MFPE for their assistance with the MSDB Collective Bargaining Agreement and concluded his report.

❖ **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – Dr. Tim Tharp (Item 7)**

Item 7 ANNUAL MONTANA DIGITAL ACADEMY REPORT – 02:45:30
Dr. Jason Neiffer

Dr. Jason Neiffer presented an update on work completed at the MTDA over the past year, reviewed the MTDA Annual Report, presented Distance Learning enrollment numbers, shared information on the Distance Learning Clearinghouse, and updated the Board on legislation passed related to Artificial Intelligence that affects MTDA. Dr. Neiffer answered Board members' questions.

The Board recessed for the day at 12:00 PM for School District Tours.

Friday, September 12, 2025
8:30AM

CALL TO ORDER – 00:00:56

Chair Tim Tharp called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. The Chair led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance, Ms. Kris Stockton took Roll Call, and the Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests. Chair Tharp thanked Superintendent Patterson and Superintendent Shipman for their hospitality and for hosting the Board.

Board members: Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair; Dr. Ron Slinger, Vice Chair; Ms. Madalyn Quinlan; Dr. Hannah Nieskens; Ms. Lisa Schmidt; Ms. Julia Maxwell; Ms. Renee Rasmussen, Ms. Lydia Comstock, Student Representative. Ex Officio members: State Superintendent Susie Hedalen, OPI; Dr. Angela McLean, OCHE. Staff: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Ms. Julie Balsam, Administrative Assistant; Ms. Cathy Kincheloe, Director of Planning, Community Choice Schools Commission. Guests: Mr. Patrick Cates, OPI; Ms. Cedar Rose, OPI; Ms. Marie Judisch, OPI; Ms. Crystal Andrews, OPI; Ms. Ellery Bresler, OPI; Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI; Superintendent Randy Shipman, Dillon Elementary School; Superintendent Josh Patterson, Beaverhead County High School; Dr. Rob Watson, School Administrators of Montana (SAM); Ms. Kristi Steinberg, UM; Ms. Christy Mock-Stutz, OPI; Mr. Brenton Craggs, OPI; Deputy Superintendent Craig Barringer, OPI; Ms. Tyler Capece, OPI; Ms. Kim Popham, MFPE; Superintendent Paul Furthmyre, MSDB; Mr. JP Plutt, Dillon Tribune; Superintendent Marcy Cobell, Heart Butte K-12 Schools; Board Chair Joe Crawford, Heart Butte K-12 Schools; Superintendent Wes Young, Lustre Christian High School; Assistant Superintendent Josh McKay, Helena Public Schools; Superintendent Matthew Hauk, Geyser K-12 Schools; Superintendent Pax Haslem, Stanford K-12 Schools, Board Chair Rachel Pretty On Top, Lodge Grass Public Schools; Superintendent Erik Wilkerson, Jefferson County Public Schools; Superintendent James Kapptie, Ekalaka Public Schools; County Superintendent John Nielson, Gallatin County Schools; Board Chair Melissa Fisher, Lame Deer Public Schools; County Superintendent Nita Crockett, McCone County Schools.

❖ **CHARTER SCHOOL COMMITTEE – Dr. Ron Slinger (Item 8)**

Item 8 UPDATE ON COMMUNITY CHOICE SCHOOLS COMMISSION – 00:04:30
Cathy Kincheloe

Ms. Cathy Kincheloe presented an update on the Request for Proposal for an assessment tool, discussed conversations held with potential Choice Schools, and reviewed a grant request to fund the Director of Planning position. Ms. Kincheloe announced the appointments of Mr. Chip Lindenlaub and Ms. Taylor Ramos to the Commission and the reappointment of Mr. Mark Huffstetler, provided an update on the Commission meeting held

on September 9, 2025, and reviewed the Advance to be held October 10-11, 2025 in Helena. Ms. Kincheloe thanked Board staff for their work and answered Board members' questions.

❖ **LICENSURE COMMITTEE – Dr. Ron Slinger (Items 9-10)**

**Item 9 NOTICE OF SURRENDER IN BPE CASE #2025-04 – 00:12:10
Brenton Craggs**

Mr. Brenton Craggs presented an Affidavit of Surrender of the educator license in BPE Case #2025-04, made a correction to the Affidavit of Surrender, and answered Board members' questions.

**Item 10 INFORMATION AND PRESENTATION ON THE PARA PATHWAY PROGRAM –
00:22:45
Patrick Cates**

Mr. Patrick Cates presented the proposed Para Pathway Program to be run in partnership with Dawson Community College that would create a pathway for paraprofessionals to become teachers. Mr. Cates answered Board members' questions.

❖ **ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE – Renee Rasmussen (Items 11-12)**

**Item 11 ASSESSMENT UPDATE AND INFORMATION ON MAST PROFICIENCY SCORES –
00:54:50
Cedar Rose**

Ms. Cedar Rose presented the MAST cut scores, reviewed the process for how the scores were set, provided an update of MAST, and answered Board members' questions.

**Item 12 INITIAL REVIEW AND WORK SESSION OF EARLY LITERACY AND NUMERACY
ADVISORY COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO EARLY TARGETED
INTERVENTION RULEMAKING – 01:17:40
McCall Flynn, Marie Judisch, Early Literacy and Numeracy Advisory Council
Members**

Ms. McCall Flynn reviewed legislation that added Early Numeracy to the Early Literacy Targeted Interventions statute, discussed work completed by the Early Literacy and Numeracy Advisory Council to implement the legislation, and reviewed the timeline for implementation. Ms. Marie Judisch reviewed the rulemaking recommendations for Early Targeted Interventions and Ms. Flynn and Ms. Judisch answered Board members' questions.

❖ **ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – Madalyn Quinlan (Items 13-17)**

**Item 13 INFORMATION ON THE TIMELINE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW
MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY CONTENT
STANDARDS – 01:34:13
Marie Judisch**

Ms. Marie Judisch presented the process for implementation of the new Mathematics Content Standards and the English Language Arts and Literacy Content Standards, reviewed trainings and webinars OPI will offer districts, and answered Board members' questions.

**Item 14 ACTION ON AND RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED ON REVISIONS
TO ARM TITLE 10, CHAPTER 53, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY
CONTENT STANDARDS – 01:51:02
Madalyn Quinlan**

Ms. McCall Flynn stated no comments were received during the Public Comment period and action on the adoption notice is scheduled for the November 2025 Board meeting after the Economic Impact Statement is presented to the Education Interim Budget Committee.

**Item 15 ACTION AND PRESENTATION ON THE CORRECTIVE PLANS FOR SCHOOLS IN
DEFICIENT STATUS FOR ACCREDITATION – 02:03:51
Crystal Andrews and Ellery Bresler**

Ms. Crystal Andrews and Ms. Ellery Bresler reviewed the requirements for Schools in Deficient Status for Accreditation to create Corrective Plans and introduced the three school districts whose Corrective Plans were before the Board for approval.

Superintendent Marcy Cobell and Board Chair Joe Crawford presented the Corrective Plan for Heart Butte K-12 Schools to correct the deviations and answered Board members' questions.

Superintendent Victoria Falls Down of Lame Deer Public Schools was not in attendance so the Board moved on to Lustre Christian High School.

Superintendent Wes Young presented the Corrective Plan for Lustre Christian High School to correct the deviations and answered Board members' questions.

Ms. McCall Flynn and representatives from OPI attempted to connect with Lame Deer Public Schools but no representatives were present online.

Board member Quinlan moved to approve the Corrective Plan for Heart Butte K-12 Schools as recommended by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Motion seconded by Board member Nieskens.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Board member Quinlan moved to approve the Corrective Plan for Lustre Christian High School as recommended by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.

Vice Chair Slinger stated the plan presented is insufficient.

Chair Tharp asked what the consequences would be if the plan were denied and the school asked to return to the November Board meeting with a revised plan.

Board member Rasmussen stated she understands the previous comments but would prefer the plan be approved so the school can correct the deviations.

Board member Quinlan stated she could withdraw the motion and give the school the option to revise the plan and return to the November Board meeting.

Chair Tharp stated his agreement with Board members Quinlan and Rasmussen.

Board member Nieskens stated that to be fair to the district who presented a Corrective Plan the vote should take place and consider possible denial.

Board member Slinger agreed to withdraw the motion and request the school return to the November Board meeting with a revised plan.

Board member Maxwell stated it benefits the Board and the school to allow the school to return to the November Board meeting with a revised plan.

Ms. McCall Flynn clarified that the school must have an approved plan. If the Board denies the plan or withdraws the motion the school must return with a revised plan for Board approval.

Superintendent Young explained the process he used to write and submit the Corrective Plan to OPI.

Board member Quinlan withdrew the motion.

Vice Chair Slinger called for the question.

Chair Tharp restated the motion to approve the Corrective Plan for Lustre Christian High School as recommended by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Roll Call vote. Motion failed with Board member Rasmussen voting in support of the motion.

Lustre Christian High School will present a revised plan at the November Board meeting.

No one was present from Lame Deer Public Schools.

Board member Quinlan moved to deny the Corrective Plan for Lame Deer Public Schools. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.

Board member Schmidt stated she would like to see additional information in the plan in November.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Lame Deer Public Schools will present their Corrective Plan at the November Board meeting.

Item 16 ACTION ON THE CORRECTIVE PLANS FOR SCHOOLS IN ADVICE STATUS FOR ACCREDITATION – 03:14:52

Crystal Andrews and Ellery Bresler

Ms. Crystal Andrews and Ms. Ellery Bresler presented the Corrective Plans for schools in Advice Status for Accreditation, highlighted work schools have completed to correct deficiencies and explained the process OPI used to assist schools in Advice status. Ms. Andrews and Ms. Bresler answered Board members' questions.

Board member Quinlan moved to approve the Corrective Plans for Schools in Advice Status for Accreditation. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.

Board member Maxwell encouraged Superintendents to leave districts in a good place when they leave.

Board member Nieskens encouraged Superintendents to review plans from other districts to learn from one another and gather ideas to address deficiencies.

Board member Rasmussen voiced previous concerns that rural schools will struggle with the Accreditation process and stated options need to be available for rural schools.

Superintendent Patterson noted that resources are available via the School Administrators of Montana to assist Superintendents.

No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Item 17 UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE INTENSIVE ASSISTANCE PROCESS FOR ACCREDITATION – 03:22:59

Dr. Julie Murgel and Crystal Andrews

Dr. Julie Murgel and Ms. Crystal Andrews reviewed the Intensive Assistance Process for Accreditation and Board members made comments and stated their concerns.

❖ EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – Dr. Tim Tharp (Item 18)

**Item 18 ELECTION OF OFFICERS – 03:44:06
McCall Flynn**

Ms. McCall Flynn opened the floor for nominations for the Chair position.

Vice Chair Slinger nominated Dr. Tim Tharp for Chair.

No additional nominations. Motion passed unanimously.

Board member Quinlan nominated Dr. Ron Slinger for Vice Chair.

No additional nominations. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Flynn reviewed the November Board meeting in Missoula and the NASBE Annual Conference in October that she and several Board members will attend.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS November 19-21, 2025, Missoula, MT – 03:46:30

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

PUBLIC COMMENT – 03:48:44

Superintendent Patterson thanked the Board for coming to Dillon and provided public comments on the ACT test and asked the Board to consider three years of math for graduation requirements.

Dr. Rob Watson provided public comments regarding the Corrective Plans for Accreditation for schools in Deficient Status, recommended a future Board meeting presentation on the Teacher Apprenticeship Grant through the Department of Labor and Industry, and announced the upcoming SAM Fall Conference and topics that will be presented.

Superintendent Shipman thanked the Board for their visit to Dillon and for the Board's work to enhance public education.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:29 PM.

The Montana Board of Public Education is a Professional Development Unit Provider. Attending a Board of Public Education Meeting either in person or via Zoom may qualify you to receive professional development units. Please complete the necessary information on the sign-in sheet if you are applying for professional development units.

Agenda items are handled in the order listed on the approved agenda. Items may be rearranged unless listed "time certain". Public comment is welcome on all items listed as "Action" and as noted at the beginning and end of each meeting.

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