

# BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

June 22, 2026  
Zoom

**Monday, June 22, 2026**  
**1:30 PM**

## **CALL TO ORDER – 00:00:25**

Chair Tim Tharp called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM. The Chair led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance, Ms. Kris Stockton took Roll Call, the Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests.

Board members: Dr. Tim Tharp, Chair; Dr. Ron Slinger, Vice Chair; Dr. Hannah Nieskens; Ms. Lisa Schmidt; Ms. Julia Maxwell; Ms. Renee Rasmussen; Ms. Amanda Mills; Ms. Lydia Comstock, Student Representative. Ex Officio members: State Superintendent Susie Hedalen, Office of Public Instruction (OPI). Staff: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Mr. Rich Batterman, Board Legal Counsel. Guests: Mr. Ben Ternes, Office of Budget and Program Planning (OBPP); Ms. Christy Mock-Stutz, OPI; Mr. Dylan Klapmeier, OPI; Dr. Erin Ellis, Hellgate Elementary; Ms. Nancy Hall, OBPP; Ms. Marie Judisch, OPI; Ms. Tyler Capece, OPI; Dr. Ryan Schrenk, Montana Digital Academy; Ms. Kim Popham, Montana Federation of Public Employees; Superintendent Matthew Driessen, DeSmet Elementary School District.

## **ADOPT AGENDA – 00:02:44**

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

***No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

## **❖ ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE – Renee Rasmussen (Item 1)**

### **Item 1                      ACTION ON THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON MODIFICATIONS TO THE SINGLE SYSTEM OF STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT – MATH AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS – 00:03:25** **Renee Rasmussen**

Board member Rasmussen summarized the May meeting discussion regarding the MAST Assessment and shared that the Assessment Committee used Chat GPT to analyze the OPI survey results for trends. The analysis revealed that stakeholder perceptions are improving, while student responses remain stable from year to year showing students prefer the small testlets. Board member Rasmussen noted that areas of concern were lack of trust in data usage, issues with score reporting and availability, high test burden on teachers, insufficient professional development, negative cultural perceptions, and lack of local relevance. Board member Rasmussen noted that Chat GPT recommended improvements in score reporting, building educator trust, enhancing professional development, and focusing on instructional use. Dr. Hannah Nieskens provided additional context on the AI analysis and emphasized it is important to remember that there are strengths among the challenges.

**Board member Rasmussen moved to conditionally approve the Superintendent's recommended modifications to the system of statewide assessment for math and ELA. Approval is conditioned upon the Office of Public Instruction, in consultation with this Board, creating a task force comprised of testing experts, educators, and appropriate stakeholders to refine the assessment to better achieve the following purposes: (1) make instructional usefulness a primary measure of success, improving classroom instruction and student outcomes; (2) boost the efficacy of score reports and the reporting process; (3) limit testing burdens and enhance structured feedback routines; (4) expand opportunities for professional development focused on instructional use; and (5) build educator trust in the data. Motion seconded by Dr. Hannah Nieskens.**

***Superintendent Susie Hedalen noted that the OPI can meet the conditions stated in the motion and requested a meeting with the Board Assessment Committee before the July Board meeting to develop an action plan.***

***Board member Schmidt discussed the importance of growth measurements to improve instruction and would like to see that added.***

***Superintendent Hedalen stated that growth measurements is an area that the OPI is working on and it will be rolled out in the 2026-2027 school year.***

***Board member Rasmussen stated that while MAST has the potential to be an excellent assessment it is not right now and expressed concerns that it is being used to fulfill the federal requirements.***

***Dr. Hannah Nieskens clarified the difference between the OPI Technical Advisory Committee and the proposed Think Tank which would operate similarly to the Accreditation Think Tank.***

***Chair Tim Tharp echoed Dr. Nieskens' statement.***

***Vice Chair Slinger noted that while the data showed conflicting results there is clear room for improvement. Dr. Slinger noted the importance of adhering to the stipulations outlined in the motion.***

***Superintendent Hedalen noted that the OPI has compiled all the feedback and analyzed the results.***

***Board member Rasmussen noted the feedback indicates that OPI is working to improve the test and to assist parents and students with the results.***

***Dr. Nieskens asked whether OPI has the resources to implement the conditions if the motion passes today and what would happen if the motion fails.***

***Superintendent Hedalen stated that while grant funding is available now for enhancements, third through eighth grade assessments are federally funded if the requirements are met, otherwise funding will be pulled.***

***Dr. Erin Ellis gave public comment in support of the MAST Assessment.***

***Superintendent Matthew Driessen concurred with Dr. Ellis and noted that changing the assessment would cause a loss of credibility. He noted that more data assists educators to improve student outcomes and student growth.***

***Dr. Tharp restated the motion.***

***No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.***

**PUBLIC COMMENT – 00:48:37**

No public comment.

Ms. McCall Flynn reviewed the upcoming July 22-24, 2026, Board meeting.

Chair Tim Tharp thanked everyone for their time and attention to this matter.

**ADJOURN – 00:50:33**

Meeting adjourned at 2:20PM.

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