

BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MEETING AGENDA

March 19, 2026
Ronan Middle School, Library
35885 Round Butte Rd
Ronan, MT

March 20, 2026
Ronan High School, Library
130 3rd Ave NW
Ronan, MT

Thursday, March 19, 2026
Ronan Middle School
8:30AM

CALL TO ORDER – 00:00:15

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, 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. Lydia Comstock, Student Representative. Ex Officio members: State Superintendent Susie Hedalen, Office of Public Instruction (OPI); Dr. Angela McLean, Office of Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE). Staff: Ms. McCall Flynn, Executive Director; Ms. Kris Stockton, Administrative Specialist; Ms. Julie Balsam, Administrative Assistant; Ms. Lea Ann Munkres, Program Officer; Ms. Cathy Kincheloe, Director of Planning, Community Choice Schools Commission. Guests: Superintendent Mark Johnston, Ronan Public Schools (RPS); Ms. Cedar Rose, OPI; Ms. Marie Judisch, OPI; Dr. Julie Murgel, OPI; Ms. Christy Mock-Stutz, OPI; Ms. Crystal Andrews, OPI; Mr. Brenton Craggs, OPI; Ms. Krystal Smith, OPI; Ms. Chris Emerson, OPI; Ms. Kim Popham, Montana Federation of Public Employees (MFPE); Superintendent Cheryl Peterson, Creston School District; Dr. Rob Watson, School Administrators of Montana (SAM); Dr. Dan Lee, University of Montana (UM); Superintendent Rex Wertz, Helena Public Schools; Mr. Ryan Fisher, RPS; Superintendent Drea O'Donnell, Shepherd Public Schools; Representative Linda Reksten, HD 13; Ms. Kristi Steinberg, UM; Dr. Beth Durodoye, Montana State University Northern; Mr. David Larson; Dr. Melanie Reaves, Montana State University Billings; Dr. Tricia Seifert, Montana State University; Mr. Josh Illig, Ronan Charter Academy; Ms. Sandra Beal, RPS; Superintendent Heather Jarrett, Reed Point Public Schools (RPPS); Ms. Kimberly Evans, OPI; Ms. Jessie Luther, Taylor Luther Group; Ms. Isabelle Welch, American Board; Ms. Jacque Treaster, OCHE; Board Chair Bob Cornwell, RPS.

PUBLIC COMMENT – 00:02:27

Public comment from Superintendent Cheryl Peterson regarding concerns with the MAST Assessment.

Public comment from Dr. Rob Watson announcing the approval of the first school district health insurance trust.

Public comment from Superintendent Rex Wertz regarding concerns with the MAST Assessment and support for the school district health insurance trust.

Public comment from Superintendent Drea O'Donnell regarding concerns with the MAST Assessment.

CONSENT AGENDA – 00:17:35

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

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

ADOPT AGENDA – 00:18:11

Board member Schmidt moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

❖ **REPORTS – Dr. Tim Tharp (Items 1-5)**

Item 1 CHAIRPERSON REPORT – 00:18:38
Dr. Tim Tharp

Superintendent Mark Johnston welcomed the Board to Ronan and expressed appreciation for the approval of the Ronan Charter Academy. Chair Tim Tharp reviewed meetings and conferences he has attended since the January Board meeting, reviewed the revised Committee List, and announced that new Board member Amanda Mills will join the May Board meeting. Dr. Angela McLean thanked the Chair for his advocacy regarding mental health.

Item 2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT – 00:27:27

Ms. McCall Flynn thanked the Ronan School District for their hospitality in hosting the meeting. Ms. Flynn shared highlights from recent visits to the new public charter schools and discussed updates given at the Education Interim Committee and Education Interim Budget Committee meetings.

Item 3 STATE SUPERINTENDENT REPORT – 00:33:30
State Superintendent Susie Hedalen

Superintendent Susie Hedalen updated the Board on OPI activities, including the new Strategic Plan, upcoming events, and reports presented at the Education Interim Committee and Education Interim Budget Committee meetings. Superintendent Hedalen provided an overview of the current status of the MAST Assessment before turning it over to assessment program staff.

Assessment Report: Ms. Cedar Rose presented a report on statewide testing schedules including MAST, alternative assessments, and ACT testing. Ms. Marie Judisch reviewed the MAST Science Assessment pilot program. Ms. Rose answered Board members' questions.

Federal Report: Superintendent Susie Hedalen noted she will be in Washington DC the following week to meet with Montana's congressional delegation to discuss education issues.

Content Standards Report: Ms. Marie Judisch provided an update on the Content Standards review cycle and discussed implementation of the new English Language Arts Standards.

Annual School Food Services Report: Ms. Christine Emerson presented the Annual School Food Services Report and answered Board members' questions.

Item 4 COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT – 01:31:43
Dr. Angela McLean

Dr. Angela McLean provided updates on Future Ready, the Grow Your Own Initiative, a partnership with the Rural Initiative Listening Lab, and presented a recent change to the American Indian Tuition Waiver program.

Item 5 STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT – 01:39:34
Lydia Comstock

Ms. Lydia Comstock provided an update on the Montana Association of Student Council Executive Board leadership changes and highlighted activities of Montana students at the national level. Ms. Comstock shared progress she has made to gather more student input in education issues and discussed student feedback and concerns related to the MAST testing.

❖ **CHARTER SCHOOL COMMITTEE – Lisa Schmidt (Items 6-7)**

Item 6 UPDATE ON COMMUNITY CHOICE SCHOOLS COMMISSION – 01:37:34
Cathy Kincheloe

Ms. Cathy Kincheloe provided an update on the Commission's recent work related to policy development and shared information on an upcoming conference Commission members will attend. Ms. Kincheloe noted the next Commission meeting will be held in April and answered Board members' questions.

**Item 7 ACTION ON THE EXECUTION OF NEW AND REVISED PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACTS – 01:58:47
Lisa Schmidt**

Ms. McCall Flynn noted that Livingston Public Schools will take a planning year and will not open until 2027.

Board member Schmidt moved to approve the new and revised Public Charter School Contracts. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.

Board member Rasmussen questioned whether the Public Charter School Program should work on school performance measures as the Community Choice Schools Commission has done. Ms. McCall Flynn noted that this work has already been done and will be reviewed by the Board Charter Committee and an update will be provided at the May 2026 Board meeting.

No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Representative Linda Reksten reviewed recent Education Interim Committee meetings with a focus on the School Safety Study. Representative Reksten specifically noted committee work on student mental health services and relayed the ongoing concerns the Committee has with the MAST Assessment.

❖ BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION TOURS & ACTIVITIES

The Board traveled to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Complex to meet with the CSKT Tribal Council.

❖ BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANNING – Dr. Tim Tharp

12:15PM DISCUSSION OF MISSION AND VISION CONTINUED

12:45PM DISCUSS COMMITMENTS AND INITIAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1:45PM WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS

*****TIME CERTAIN AT 2:00PM*****

❖ LICENSURE COMMITTEE – Dr. Ron Slinger (Items 8-14)

**Item 8 ACTION AND INFORMATION ON INITIAL REVIEW OF BPE CASE #2026-01, DAVIS –
00:01:38
Brenton Craggs**

Mr. Brenton Craggs reviewed the revocation request from the State Superintendent for the educator in BPE Case #2026-01 and answered Board members' questions.

Vice Chair Slinger moved to send BPE Case #2026-01, Davis, to a contested case hearing to be scheduled at the completion of the criminal proceedings. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.

Clarification of the motion was made by Chair Tim Tharp that the hearing will not take place until criminal proceedings are completed.

No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Vice Chair Slinger moved to suspend the educator's license in BPE Case #2026-01, Davis, pending the completion of criminal proceedings or action by the Board. Motion seconded by Board member Rasmussen.

Chair Tharp explained that this will suspend the educator's license until the criminal proceedings have been completed.

Mr. Rich Batterman advised the motion should be revised to state that the Board believes there is sufficient evidence to believe that professional misconduct occurred.

Ms. Crystal Andrews presented the State Exit Report and answered Board members' questions.

Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the Site Visit and Accreditation State Exit Report of ABCTE for Program approval for Alternative Credentialing as recommended by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Motion seconded by Board member Maxwell.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Item 12 ACTION ON THE SITE VISIT AND JOINT ACCREDITATION STATE EXIT REPORT OF MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY BILLINGS EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROVIDER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – 00:35:54
Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Crystal Andrews presented the Joint State Exit Report and noted a rejoinder submitted by the school regarding specific findings. Dr. Melanie Reaves answered Board members' questions.

Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the Site Visit and Joint Accreditation State Exit Report of Montana State University Billings Educator Preparation Provider in the Department of Education as recommended by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.

Chair Tharp thanked Dr. Reaves for her work.

No further discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Item 13 ACTION ON MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHERN GOOD CAUSE EXTENSION REQUEST – 00:42:41
Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Crystal Andrews reviewed the rationale for the one-semester Good Cause Extension request from Montana State University Northern. Dr. Beth Durodoye expressed her appreciation for the Board's support of the request.

Vice Chair Slinger moved to approve the request for a Good Cause Extension for Montana State University Northern Educator Preparation Provider in the Department of Education as recommended by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Motion seconded by Board member Schmidt.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Item 14 INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ON CLASS 8 DUAL CREDIT POSTSECONDARY FACULTY LICENSE – 00:46:51
Dr. Julie Murgel, Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Crystal Andrews and Dr. Julie Murgel reviewed the Class 8 Dual Credit Postsecondary Faculty License, specifically barriers to licensure in administrative rule and the decline of applicants. Vice Chair Ron Slinger provided additional context from the postsecondary level.

❖ ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE – Dr. Hannah Nieskens (Items 15-17)

**Item 15 ACTION ON PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION STATUS FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS – 01:15:30
Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Crystal Andrews reviewed the information provided in the agenda packet and answered Board members' questions.

Dr. Hannah Nieskens moved to approve the Provisional Accreditation Status for Public Charter Schools as recommended by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Motion seconded by Board member Maxwell.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Item 16 ACTION ON THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION ON THE INTENSIVE ASSISTANCE PROCESS FOR ACCREDITATION – 01:19:39

Dr. Julie Murgel, Christy Mock-Stutz

Dr. Julie Murgel and Ms. Christy Mock-Stutz presented the Superintendent’s recommendation for the Intensive Assistance Process for Accreditation, reviewed the steps of the process, and the corrective actions required for schools to resolve deviations. Dr. Murgel and Ms. Mock-Stutz answered Board members’ questions.

Dr. Hannah Nieskens moved to approve the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s recommendation on the Intensive Assistance Process for Accreditation. Motion seconded by Vice Chair Slinger.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Item 17 INFORMATION ON THE PROPOSED PROCEDURES AND SCHEDULES FOR REVIEWING THE ACCREDITATION STATUS OF EACH SCHOOL – ASSURANCE STANDARDS – 01:54:04
Crystal Andrews**

Ms. Crystal Andrews presented the proposed accreditation procedures and schedules for Assurance Standards. Vice Chair Ron Slinger thanked Ms. Andrews and the Accreditation Think Tank for their work.

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

**Item 18 ACTION ON MONTANA ADVANCED OPPORTUNITY GRANT APPLICATION FOR LAME DEER – 02:00:11
Krystal Smith**

Ms. Krystal Smith reviewed the Lame Deer Public School application and noted the reason for the late request.

Board member Maxwell moved to approve the Montana Advanced Opportunity Grant Application from Lame Deer Public Schools. Motion seconded by Vice Chair Slinger.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

❖ ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE – Renee Rasmussen (Item 19)

**Item 19 ACTION ON THE APPROVED LIST OF SCREENING TOOLS PERTAINING TO TITLE 10, CHAPTER 54, EARLY NUMERACY TARGETED INTERVENTION STANDARDS – 02:03:06
Renee Rasmussen**

Board member Maxwell moved to approve the Approved List of Screening Tools Pertaining to Title 10, Chapter 54, Early Numeracy Targeted Intervention Standards. Motion seconded by Vice Chair Slinger.

Ms. McCall Flynn reviewed the Early Numeracy Advisory Council’s recommended screening tools and the process used to select them.

No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

**Ronan High School, Library
130 3rd Ave NW
Ronan, MT**

**Friday, March 20, 2026
Ronan High School
8:30AM**

CALL TO ORDER – 00:00:00

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, the Chair read the Statement of Public Participation and welcomed guests.

Ms. McCall Flynn reviewed the agenda items for the upcoming meeting in Great Falls in May.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS May 21-22, 2026, Great Falls, MT

MACIE Update

Review Public Charter School Performance Reports

Action on K-12 Schools Payment Schedule

Assessment Update

Federal Update

Content Standards Revision Update

Accreditation Update – Student Performance Standards

Action on Accreditation Procedures and Schedules

Action on Accreditation Status of All Schools

Review Draft CAEP MOU

Executive Director Performance Evaluation

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.

❖ **BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION TOURS & ACTIVITIES**

- 9:15AM** **RONAN CHARTER ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL TOUR – AUTOMOTIVE SHOP
130 3RD AVE NW**
- 10:00AM** **RONAN CHARTER ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL TOUR – AG/GARDENING
35885 ROUND BUTTE RD**
- 10:30AM** **RONAN CHARTER ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL TOUR – SMALL ENGINES
35885 ROUND BUTTE RD**
- 11:00AM** **RONAN CHARTER ACADEMY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
130 3RD AVE NW**

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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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