



Board of Trustees Work Session Minutes

Tuesday, February 22nd, 2022 | Tour at 3:30 / 4:00pm | Central Elementary and via TEAMS

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

Trustees

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair
Terry Beaver, Trustee
John McEwen, Trustee
Jennifer McKee, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Libby Goldes, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee

Others

Rex Weltz, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Karen Ogden, Communications Officer
Brian Cummings, Assistant Superintendent
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Nick Radley, Principal of Central Elementary
Kayla Ryan, Instructional Coach
Ashlie Buresh, Instructional Coach
Jill Downing, Title 1 Teacher
Tony Napoletano, Upper Montessori Teacher,
Brittany Hogan, Trailhead Teacher
Sarah Stankowiak, Upper FLS (3-5) Teacher
Jamie Cosenza, Lower (K-2) FLS Teacher
Tom Cohn, Transportation Specialist
Drew VanFossen, Routing Specialist
Many Central Staff Members

I. TOUR OF CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

II. CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. After General Public Comment we are looking forward to a Transportation Update. There will be a presentation, and after that we will recess the meeting for 15 to 20 minutes, and there will be a bus that Trustees and staff are going to have the opportunity to tour. We will come back, resume the meeting, and consider the rest of our action agenda.

IV. PRESENTATION:

Central Elementary Principal, Nick Radley, began with a Power Point presentation which he presented to the committee. Mr. Radley began the presentation with the Mission Alignment of Helena Public Schools and Central Elementary School. Mr. Radley commented. The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize his or her individual potential with the knowledge, skills, and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner. The primary purpose of Central School is to provide a high-quality education. It is our goal to provide that education in a safe, respectful learning environment that supports the lifelong process of becoming a productive, caring citizen. Here at Central we have 11 traditional classrooms, 2 kindergarten-third grade classrooms, 1 fourth grade classroom, 1 fourth/fifth classroom, and 1 fifth grade classroom. We have 3 Montessori classrooms-2 lower Montessori classrooms (1-3), and 1 upper Montessori classroom (4/5). We have 3 District Special Educations Programs, 2 Functional Life Skills, and 1 Trailhead. Our attendance rate year to date is at 89% and parent teacher conference attendance average in the fall was 92%. Our goal is to have a 95% daily attendance rate.

Mr. Radley discussed student demographics at Central.

- Enrollment: 311
- Traditional Classrooms: 220
- Montessori: 58
- Functional Life Skills: 23
- Trailhead: 10
- Free/Reduced: 66% (2019/20)
- SACC: 27
- PEAK: 12
- Students in Transition: 5
- 504 Plans: 6 students
- Angel Fund: 28 students
- Food Pack Program: 102 students
- Individualized Education Plans: 106
 - Resource: 47
 - Speech only: 26
 - Functional Life Skills: 23
 - Trailhead: 10

Mr. Radley commented. If you look at the ethnicity of our students, 84% are white, 5% are Native American, 5% are two or more races, and 4% are Hispanic. In terms of diversity in Montana and in Helena, this is one of the most diverse schools we have, and I think that is great.

Mr. Radley shared a slide displaying the dedicated staff at Central. There are 14 classroom teachers, 1 Title I Teacher, 5 Special Education teachers, 1.8 Speech/Language Pathologist, 1 Counselor, 1 CSCT therapist and 1 Behavior Specialist (IMCH), 1 Librarian, 1.1 PE teachers (shared with Warren), 1.1 PE teachers (shared with Warren), 1.1 Music teachers (shared with Warren), 10 SPED Para-Educators, 3.8 General Educations paras, 1 Interpreter, 1 Nurse (shared with Bryant), 1 Administrative Assistant, 1 SAAC staff, 1 School Psychologist (shared with Kessler), 3 Custodians, 2 Kitchen staff, and 1 Administrator.

Mr. Radley moved on to discuss the District Level Elementary Focus for 21-22. Mr. Radley commented. From an elementary perspective we have what we would say kind of a three-pronged focus of what we're doing. We have our instructional framework in place that's been in there for a few years. We're working through our standards-based grading. The next part of our presentation will get into the targeted instruction. Central has been on a Literacy Grant and this is year four. It's us and Bryant that have the support and the dedicated person coming to us. These were the first two schools to get instructional coaches at the elementary with Ashlie and Kayla, who you will hear from in a few minutes. We wanted to introduce our data and the way that we're doing it as a school through our action plan. Part of this is through the literacy grant and part of this is just through good instruction and good practice and asking questions-where are we going, why are we going there, and what triggers do we have to help us make our decisions?

Kayla Ryan, Instructional Coach, commented. I am our third through fifth grade instructional coach, so I share time here and over at Bryant through the grant. So, looking at this, this is the framework that we make any decisions within our school. It's our continuous improvement cycle. So, it's our way that we are responding to anything that comes up throughout the year and making sure that we're headed the right direction. So, we have four steps: PLAN, DO, STUDY, and ACT. The cycle continues throughout the year, and we also have cycles that happen at the grade level. Teachers are doing that in their own classrooms. We're also doing it at the school level, which is what we're going to focus on for this presentation.

Ashlie Buresh, Instructional Coach, commented. On the next slide, we're going to start with the PLAN portion of the PDSA, which is our action plan. It is a document where we set school goals and then talk about the steps that we're taking to reach those goals. To set the goals we use three data pieces. First is our comprehensive needs assessment, which is the staff survey that we take at the beginning of the year and the end of the year. Second is our walkthrough data that ties to our instructional framework, and third is our student data that ties to the work that we're doing with our intervention groups that we call WIN, or What I Need. So, we take those three pieces of data and set goals which you will see in the next section.

Ms. Ryan commented. Once we gather data, we're looking at what our next steps are in the DO section. So, at the start of this we came up with a SMART goal that is our overarching goal for the year, and it's based on our data. Our goal for this year is by June 2022 to decrease the number of students in grades two through five in the intensive band on the ELA iReady by 14%. This is our goal for everyone in the school. We have some sub goals below that for K-1 because they use a different assessment. All of this is what we're working together within our school to reach. You'll see in the action plan here a cool part that we've adapted this year is now we have different sections within it. Each committee is focusing on goals that are helping us achieve that same overarching goal. So, this is an example of our Care Team, and the action plan steps that they are working toward throughout the year, who's going to be doing them, and when we've accomplished them.

Jill Downing, Title I Teacher, commented. In reviewing our comprehensive needs assessment data from our staff, one of the areas that we noted that we should strengthen was in the area of family engagement. So, these are some actionable steps that we have implemented or are going to be implementing in the future. The family engagement action plan committee will provide us with a framework to offer family engagement school-wide, at the grade level, and then with individual families. Some activities we've done this year are a winter story walk and Central caroling. We have our Charlotte's Web One Book Month going on right now to promote a love of reading. We have calls to families that I make periodically through the month just checking in on families asking how their child's school year is going, if there's anything that the school can do to better support their child, and what kinds of family engagement activities they might like to see. Mr. Radley will be doing coffee with families, as COVID allows. The last thing I want to touch on is our after-school programming. This year, we did learning sessions and we offered those for selected first graders. It was an hour program for two weeks and we had about 8 to 12 students that participated depending on attendance. Then we did a six-week session a small group of second graders.

Ms. Buresh commented. We have discussed PLAN, DO, and now we will discuss STUDY. This is ongoing throughout the school year. Our School Literacy Team (SLT) was formed through the literacy grant and that team meets monthly. We also have our Professional Learning Communities (PLC), that meet schoolwide twice a month. The School Literacy Team will review and walk-through student data and will then review action plan goals and steps. The School Literacy Team then decides what will be shared during PLC time.

Ms. Buresh commented regarding the ACT portion of the PDSA cycle. Some things that we're doing in the ACT portion are professional development, WIN groups, and coaching cycles. With the professional development piece, we have our conversations with coaches schedule. When we meet as a School Literacy Team, we are looking at data and something may come up that we think might need training on school wide. Then, as coaches we will research that, get some data, get ideas from other people, and then do a quick presentation

and have conversations with coaches in the morning before school. It is ongoing professional development throughout the school year.

Ms. Downing commented regarding WIN groups. Central School is in its fourth year of doing WIN groups. The groups are formed based on student data. We use iReady diagnostic assessment information and the informal assessments that the teachers have. The groups are flexible, so students can move fluidly in and out of groups based on their performance. We do have a formal time that we set up for resorting and that's after the benchmarking periods in the fall, winter, and spring. The groups occur daily Monday through Friday, and they range from 20 to 40 minutes depending on the grade level and the group. Usually Friday is the day where we are collecting data on the target skilled group. Each group has a reading domain focus for example, such as phonics or phonetic awareness. If you were to come in and observe WIN groups, you would see some consistent threads. I think this year our WIN groups have been really instrumental because of the effects of COVID with attendance. They've really allowed us to do a lot of free teaching and fill in gaps and holes from the last two years.

Ms. Ryan commented. With coaches in the schools, we act as partners with our teachers. So, we're available for coaching cycles, which is just a partnership of looking at data and trying out different strategies. Looking again, it's that mini continuous improvement cycle and we have a lot of opportunities for collaboration built in.

Mr. Radley discussed next steps. When it comes to our next steps, the first thing I want to start by saying is our mid-year benchmark this year, was the same as the end of the year was last year. So, to think about the growth that's already been made in the first 100 days of school is amazing, and our staff should be very proud of that. This literacy grant that's been a part of Central has helped us be able to focus in on what are the skills needed to get kids to be learners. On day one when I walked into classrooms, I would see similar things happening with the reading routines in every room, and it was evident that these teachers already had it down. The thing we're looking at next is how do we do similar things in Math. Our teachers are gap filling, and they're already going backwards to see what students missed during COVID, but are there different structures and routines that we can start to do with Math. With our Math data, we cut our intensive in half from the first benchmark to the second one and we almost doubled our benchmark students. So, we're projecting in a really good way. What we're doing with our PLCs, is we're alternating reading and math times within those so that we can really dig in on: what's the specific focus for this week, and what do we need to do next week, and we have been able to bounce back and forth between looking at those different things. We have a few grade levels doing WIN with Math right now. For us to be able to change our whole schedule to get all grade levels to do WIN was just too much to accomplish at this point in the year, but we do have people doing it on their own within their own grade levels. This process that we just talked about gives us that ability and flexibility to be able to move on the fly in response to the needs of our kids. So, moving forward, how do we do that with Math? To be more specific, we've got our scope and sequence and we know our framework.

Mr. Radley commented regarding the next steps for Reading: Vocabulary & Comprehension. Our literacy data is really good. We get to see the benefits of what that literacy goal has done for the school through the hard work of the teachers and the coaches. You can see those early literacy skills, phonemic awareness, phonics, and high frequency words. At fifth grade everyone is at benchmark. That means the work that was happening before is cemented, it's there, and it's working. So, moving forward, you can see third and fourth are progressing the same way. So, they've made great growth in a short period of time, and we are pretty excited on the next direction and next focus we get to take with our kids.

Tony Napoletano, Upper Montessori Teacher, commented regarding the Montessori program at Central. We have three Montessori classrooms at our school. Libby Kenney and Amy Casne-Fetz teach lower Montessori which is first, second, and third grade, and I teach the upper Montessori classroom that is fourth and fifth grade. The wonderful thing about having our pod at Central is that we get the benefits of both worlds. So, we get to be in our little Montessori pod, but we also get all the advantages that Central School has such as our staff that we can collaborate with, our coaches that we get to work with, and our new Principal who is fantastic. All the lower Montessori kids know who they're going to have for upper Montessori, which is also really nice, so I can even start working with them at a younger age. Maria Montessori is where the term Montessori education came from. Her bigger principles with regards to the elementary classrooms are to think in a really big sense and give kids a chance to be impressed with impressionistic lessons, and then with that inspiration, find the different activities that will inspire them to learn. So, this is Mrs. Kenney giving what's known as a great lesson, and there are five of them. This happens to be the coming of Math. So, she's telling the story of where many people believe that the idea of Math came from and with that big idea, then they can go to the different shelves and begin exploring the concepts of Math. So, one of the keys of the Montessori classrooms is independence and the students all have their own work plan and in lower Montessori Libby and Amy with help guide them through. Once they get into the upper Montessori classroom, I let them fail sometimes and see the consequences of those actions and then work with them to figure out the strategies that they need so they can be successful. The other component of that is that we are multi-aged and that is very intentional. Multi-aged classrooms are fundamental in Montessori classrooms. They allow for more independence, and they don't always have to depend on the teacher. They can look to an elder-as the lower Montessori teachers called the third graders compared to a first grader. The shelves are all set up to inspire kids to go towards the materials, and all the materials are sensory. The last part is collaboration. Central is an amazing family of colleagues. During PLC time we work with our Montessori partners, both at Smith and Broadwater, two times a month. We talk about best practices for Montessori but also discuss the pieces regarding our literacy grant. We also get to work with our colleagues in our general education classrooms as well. So, if something is working well for them, we can talk to them and vice versa.

Brittany Hogan, Trailhead Teacher, commented regarding the Trailhead program at Central. Trailhead is relatively new. It's the third year of the program and this is my third year

teaching it. It's hard to describe exactly what Trailhead is because I work with a wide range of students. They don't quite fit in the general education model yet, but they're not quite FFS, and there is a middle ground of what do we do? Well, they come to me, and I teach them some socially appropriate behaviors to get them into general education in whatever manner that looks like. Some socially appropriate behaviors that we're working on is it's not appropriate to leave the classroom when the teacher asked you to get your notebook out. It's not appropriate to throw a tantrum anytime you don't want to do your work. So, we look at those kind of behaviors and work on ways to decrease that behavior and increase an alternative behavior. So as with all behaviors, there's a function, there's attention, or they're trying to get access to something for example. We look at that and figure out what is the true meaning behind this behavior and how can we put a different behavior in. We also use a bunch of reinforcement throughout the day. So, I'm going to reinforce the behaviors I want to see, and oftentimes I'll ignore some of those behaviors who don't want to see. Then we put in specific interventions to increase that desired behavior. We teach them the appropriate way to get what they want. In addition to the behavior piece, we look at their communication. I have students that can communicate in full sentences with me and for the most part I know exactly what they're trying to get. I have others that I can't understand them, so we work on okay, what do you want? In addition to that communication in the behavior, we also teach a lot of academics. So, I run a lot of stations where we have 15-minute stations, and they get different academic skills on their station. We do a lot of social play, getting them to interact with each other, as well as learning those school readiness skills. I have a couple students that I'm pushing out into the general education setting, so they are working in the classroom with their same aged peers getting that interaction, and learning how to generalize skills from my classroom into another. We also work on flexible thinking and being flexible with changes and routines. Another big thing is just teaching independent thoughts. Within the classroom, we just do so much more than I can even talk about. It's amazing to see the progress when you give students the tools and you teach them the appropriate ways on how they can excel into what they might be doing.

Sarah Stankowiak, Upper FLS (3-5) Teacher, commented regarding the FLS program at Central. Ms. Stankowiak began her presentation by passing around some of the sensory tools that she uses in her classroom for the Board to review. Ms. Stankowiak commented. A lot of students in our class are nonverbal, so they don't communicate with their voice. I have six students in my class that are learning how to use an iPad in order to communicate and within those six students, I have three different programs that are all different. Ms. Stankowiak passed around the iPad's that the students use to communicate. Ms. Stankowiak commented. Jamie Cosenza is our Lower (K-2) FLS Teacher. The FLS aka Functional Life Skills Program is an educational program designed to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs, and to foster independence of students to the best of their abilities. In addition to routine academics, we work on basic life skills such as feeding, dressing, communication (ex. learning how to say hi/bye, help, wants/needs, and personal information). All of our students have communication needs whether that be students who

are non-verbal, to gestures, to echolalic, or scripting. Students can also use a variety of communication modalities such as devices, picture cards, sign language, or their voice.

The Board of Trustees then reviewed a video showing the morning routine in the FLS program. Ms. Stankowiak commented. Each child's education is tailored to meet their individual needs. Realistically, our goal is to look long term and we ask what am I doing to set them up for success, and not just here in school, but what skill sets can I give them to take to their future to use. It's not just learning the alphabet and numbers; we need to help students to be functioning humans in society whether that be following visuals to make a recipe or put something together at a job.

Mr. Radley concluded his presentation by showing a slide displaying the various community partners of Central Elementary.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair, commented. Thank you so much Mr. Radley for your presentation and getting this wonderful group of people together to contribute. Mr. Muszkiewicz thanked everyone who presented, and also thanked the staff of Central Elementary.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. I am loving the growth that I saw in your presentation, and I'm excited to see where you are at the end of the year. Thank you so much to you and your staff.

Trustee John McEwen commented. Are your absences mostly COVID related, or are there other reasons?

Mr. Radley replied. COVID is definitely part of it. The good thing is we have WIN time, so if kids miss a day, or if they are out with COVID, with WIN time you can go back and pick up where the missing spots are.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. You said that you have 26% of your students on IEPs. At Bryant they indicated that their high level of IEPs was due to their transient community that they have. Is that the case here?

Mr. Radley replied. We have a pretty high mobility here, and in the past, we have brought in quite a few students already on an IEP.

Mr. Beaver commented. I understand you have an immigration student that will be attending here. Has that presented a language problem? Will you need an interpreter?

Mr. Radley replied. Luckily with our process and how we go about our business, is every perceived challenge is an opportunity to grow. We will be bringing in someone who is an expert in language acquisition that can help give us some insight.

Mr. Beaver commented. You indicated that the majority of your kids are missing 20% of the time. Do you have a number of kids attending PEAK, because that means those students would be missing 40% of the time?

Mr. Radley replied. We have 12 PEAK students, and there is a learning expectation from our teachers that if you go to PEAK, you are still required to learn what is occurring at our school. I think those 12 students are doing a great job at maintaining.

Mr. Beaver commented. I think your staff is doing an amazing job. I am very impressed with the diversity, and there is a lot of educational expertise in various fields that are outside of the traditional mode. Brittany, I think you are doing a fantastic job. Thank you so much to all of you for what you are doing. You are making Central a very prime place in our community to work.

Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair, commented. This is a very impressive school in that there are so many different programs, and so many layers which are organized together. Your WIN groups seem to be going along well, and I'm very happy to see that Math is your next step. What does your Tier 1 instruction look like in regard to the District's curriculums that are prescribed?

Ms. Buresh commented. Tier 1 started with Carrie Cole and the training she provided the District. She showed us The Science of Reading and how to pull out the really important pieces in Journeys and how to teach those pieces in class. The teachers are exceptional at teaching reading routines, and that consistency from grade level to grade level, and from WIN group to WIN group, is so important because kids don't have to start over, and they can start where they left off.

Ms. Ryan commented. Math is our next tackle. We are starting to see some of the holes and starting to switch our understanding of Math. We are tapping into the concrete, the abstract, and the representational and how we teach that is the direction we are going. We have a lot of great Math instruction happening with our teachers, and we're just trying to find little ways that we can infuse and improve that area.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. I really enjoyed the presentation and it's really great to hear about all the fine work that is taking place at Central with your outstanding staff. There have been conversations about whether absenteeism could be linked to kids that walk to school or ride the bus. Do you have any data about which cohort might be more prone to being absent? Are there any strategies in place to encourage getting kids to school?

Mr. Radley replied. We didn't pull the data by how they got to school. We looked at the trigger points for each kid. Our first conversation was at each grade level and asked who had missed 10 percent or more of school. We went through each student and asked what those absences were related to and how can we help support them. We had different criteria saying-this might be as simple as a phone call home and making a connection, or could be as complicated as can we find a bus route? We had a conversation about each student to see what we can do next to help support them to make it better. I would say for a lot of our kids during those first conversations, we were able to turn things around and get them back coming to school. Our attendance rate has improved from the first trimester.

Trustee Goldes commented. Are students in Trailhead for a whole year or a semester? Do they go back to the school they came from when they go back to the general education population, or do they stay at Central?

Ms. Hogan commented. The original goal of Trailhead was by third grade, they're going to go back to their home school, and they'll be ready to go. As good of a goal that is, it is kind of a one size fits all. I have one student who went back to his home school, Bryant, this year. I have another student who transitioned into the FLS program. I had another student who transitioned into a fourth-grade classroom here at Central because that was his home school. So, they don't necessarily transition back to their home school, but we see where it's appropriate to fit them into the general education system. So, it could be 30 minutes in the morning in the general education class, and then back to my room. It is really just student based. Right now, we're not pushing them back to their home school because that's just another transition for them, so we're trying to keep at Central the best that we can.

Mr. Radley commented. In theory it sounds great to send them back to their home school, but when you have a fourth grader that has been with you for three or four years, they're woven into the fabric of your community, and there are times when they don't want to go back. This is now their home school. That is something to look at on a case-by-case basis.

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented. I'm blown away by the commitment and the passion, and the presence of your staff here speaks volumes. I love how you have taken basically three different programs and used the differences to build off of each other and teach the students a lot of life skills.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh commented. Is the Trailhead program the same as the CSCT program?

Mr. Radley replied. It is not. The kids in the Trailhead program are identified through the IEP process, and CSCT is mental health based.

Trustee Walsh commented. One of the things that stood out through the presentation was how cohesively it seems that everybody works together in such a collaborative environment, and it seems like a very supportive place to work. I think collaboration is a huge piece of helping our students succeed.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair, commented. Trustees, thank you very much for your questions and comments. Principal Radley, I really appreciate you giving us those numbers, especially around your demographics. The second thing is it seems like continuous improvement is embedded in everything you're doing here. There is a mentality that, we don't just do things the way we've always done things, we look at our students needs, we look at the data that we have, we innovate to do a better job, and we adapt when we have a good idea. To me it is probably the single most important thing. The third thing is I heard the word team a shocking number of times during this presentation, and it's clear that you're all working together as a team. We are so thankful for this presentation.

Superintendent Weltz commented. This is a cohesive team with a good leader, and I appreciate your leadership here. There is a lot of team chemistry here and I appreciate that. Thank you.

V. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent Weltz commented. It is simply amazing what goes on inside our schools on a daily basis. It truly takes over 1,000 people as Trustee McKee once said, from transportation to custodians, and everyone within our schools, to do the great work. Mr. Radley, and Central staff, very well done, and I appreciate you. Superintendent Weltz went through the recognition portion of his Superintendent Report and recognized his central office team’s visit to Hawthorne. Superintendent Weltz recognized PAL Educator, Ryan Cooney, who was named the 2022 Global Educator of the Year by the Montana World Affairs Council. He then recognized Capital High’s Jesse Hruska who won the Congressional App Challenge for Montana. Jesse designed an app to educate young drivers about the dangers of distracted driving. His app creation is showcased on the Congressional website, and he will be presenting it in April to members of Congress. Superintendent Weltz recognized the Night to Shine event. The performance showcases a wide variety of Helena's most talented teens. Students audition before a panel of judges that include members of the Helena performing arts community and high school DECA Leadership. Superintendent Weltz moved on to the New Business portion of his Superintendent Report and discussed ongoing negotiations with the local teacher’s union, and that his team is working on the federal data ESSER collections process, and the CRDC data collection process. Superintendent Weltz concluded his Superintendent Report by discussing his meetings and outreach within the community including meeting with the AA Superintendents, HEA, HEF, Teaching Advisory, Cabinet, Lewis and Clark Board of Health, the media, and Hometown Helena.

VI. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment offered.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items for Information

1. Transportation Report

Tom Cohn, Transportation Specialist, went through the Transportation Report and PowerPoint Presentation with the Board of Trustees. The first slide discussed what transportation does. The current operations are a weekly bus suspension rotation due to the shortage of bus drivers. Mr. Cohn commented. We are in a four-section

rotation right now. A lot of other AA schools have just canceled routes, and in my 21 years here we have never cancelled a route. Mr. Cohn recognized his transportation staff. Mr. Cohn commented. Crystal Schmidt is our Administrative Assistant, Christine Stinson handles our data, and Drew VanFossen is our Routing Specialist. Mr. Cohn commented the miles per year that the buses drive: Regular Ed drives 501,418 (2,785 per day), and SPED drives 282,830 (1,571 per day). You could drive round trip to Hawaii 122 times in a year, for a total of 784,249 miles. There are 2253 total riders, and 140 SPED riders. Mr. Cohn discussed the percentage comparison of ridership and cost. There are a total of 2,393 riders for a total cost of \$4,336,893. Mr. Cohn then discussed the bus camera system and uses. Mr. Cohn commented. Our technology is state of the art and has been installed this year. Each bus has 6 color and infrared cameras inside and 2 outside. We can store 2 to 3 weeks of data. This system is cellular, and we can watch our buses live. Our buses could be in California, and we would be able to see them in live time. We have a problem with people running the reds when the buses are stopped, and it is a problem everywhere. We will probably see 100 violators before the year is over. In the past it has been very difficult to cite someone who runs the reds because law enforcement needs proof of what happened, including the vehicle that did it and their license plate number. Now, the technology is so good you can clearly see the vehicle and the license plate. We turn the video over to Montana Highway Patrol, and every person that drives by like that gets ticketed. It has made an impact, and we have seen the numbers go down. We have some of the best technology in the nation on our buses. With our app, parents now have the ability of watching their bus come up the road.

Drew VanFossen, Routing Specialist, commented regarding the tablet solution. The tablets depend on CalAmp GPS technology to track bus location, speed, stop times, and direction. For years we used a paper check off system, where the drivers would check their kids on and off on a daily basis. The problem with that, is it is very time consuming. The driver can now use the tablet to check the student on by the push of a button, or they can use the card readers. We provide a card for the students, and parents can receive a notification when the student gets on the bus or off the bus. It is a safety and security asset, and it gives us the ability to provide real time updates. The Edulog Parent Portal App is available in all app stores for mobile phones. The app provides bus stop information, ETA, and the Where's My Bus function, and you can also set notifications. The app is safe and secure for student information, and parents can register their child for the bus through the app. We have about 3,500 parents that currently use the app. The new features of the app include Where's My Child and student scan history, and it coincides with student bus pass swipes and driver punches into the tablet. If parents have any questions about any of this, the information can be found on the transportation page of the helenapublicschools.org website, or they can call our office for assistance. Mr. VanFossen discussed system management and how their office manages student bus pass swipes, as well as how they handle bus rider registrations. Mr. VanFossen discussed the steps of the tablet ticket reporting system: Step 1-driver reports, Step 2-response generates a ticket, Step 3-new tickets receive a specific person assigned

to resolve the issue, Step 4-solution documented with a follow-up date to discuss with the driver, and Step 5-ticket is marked as complete.

Mr. Cohn commented regarding transportation for district wide programs. They provide transportation for Central Elementary FLS and Trailhead, Helena MS TLC, preschool at Ray Bjork, Trailhead at Ray Bjork, and day treatment at Ray Bjork. Mr. Cohn also reviewed the boundary analysis and application slide with the Trustees. Mr. Cohn commented. In addition to providing transportation, we are involved with the Helena Food Share. During COVID we delivered thousands of meals across our school district, and we helped distribute Chrome Books and Mobile Hotspots, and we provide masks for students. In conclusion, Mr. Cohn commented regarding First Student. We work well with First Student, the operation out there runs very well, and they are a great group of people.

Trustee Jennifer Walsh said that she uses the Edulog App as a parent, and it is very easy to use. Trustee Walsh also said how grateful she is to the transportation team for all that they do.

Trustee John McEwen commented. What is the pay rate for a bus driver?

Mr. Cohn replied. I believe it is \$17 an hour and there is a sign on bonus.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. I am totally impressed by the presentation tonight.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. It's amazing how far you go with these bus routes. Is the Edulog App available for activity bus routes as well?

Mr. Cohn replied. It is.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. Is all this technology available to us, even if we go with a new vendor?

Mr. Cohn replied. Yes, it is just a transfer of hardware, and we own the hardware.

Ms. Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair commented. Thank you for a great presentation and bus ride. We are working on updating our Facilities Master Plan, and there was a lot of information in the previous plan about the amount of time students spent on buses, boundaries, and other information like that. Were you involved with the previous plan back in 2013?

Mr. Cohn replied. I was, and two of the things we have been working on since that time is to minimize the amount of time students spend on the bus, and we want to increase ridership to reduce car traffic at the schools.

Mr. Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair, commented. Thank you so much for the great presentation. Mr. Cohn, your commitment to getting kids to school or a game is truly amazing, and we very much appreciate you. I appreciate your transparency of discussing how you and your team have dealt with the driver shortage. It's worth noting how important it was that your team delivered the food and the Chrome Books during the pandemic. Thank you very much. Mr. VanFossen your passion for this is clear and we are so thankful to have you driving the innovation in the District. I think this is one of the most amazing transportation departments in the country. Thank you both.

That concluded the Transportation Report portion of the agenda.

B. Consent Action Items

1. Approval of the 11.30.2021 Board of Trustees Work Session Minutes

Motion: Trustee John McEwen moved to approve the 11.30.2021 Board of Trustees Work Session Minutes as presented. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

C. Items for Action

1. Approval of the HEA Teacher Retirement Incentive

Ms. Stacy Collette, Human Resources Administrator, commented. Good evening, you have before you an action item which is the Helena Education Association and the Helena School District's tentative agreement for a retirement incentive for 30 teachers. This retirement incentive is offered for the next two years, so this year and next year. Employees will receive a \$15,000 termination pay in addition to the collective bargaining termination pay. We will offer this incentive for 30 teachers in that time period.

Jane Shawn, HEA President, commented. The incentive is very targeted and will only go to teachers who are at Step 20 and above, which is our highest paid teachers, and probably our teachers who have been here the longest. On Friday, HR and HEA will notify the teachers that have gotten the incentive. The people that put in for retirement but did not receive the incentive are also notified. Teachers will have until March 4th to say yes or no, and they can rescind if they wish to at that point.

Ms. Collette commented. This retirement incentive recognizes years of service to Helena Public Schools and provides an economic incentive for those who meet the criteria. This retirement incentive is approved by TRS, and this incentive is supported economically by the District. We would like to recommend that you approve this incentive.

Superintendent Rex Wertz commented. There are two pieces to this-we want to respect and recognize our most seasoned and veteran staff, because this is about people; and second there is a cost savings for the District with this incentive. It's good for those that qualify, and that is my recommendation as well.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. If you were to show me the list of educators that are considering this incentive, I wouldn't want any of them to leave, but at the same time, from a Board level we look at this as a way to equalize where our staff are at on the matrix so that we have a more sustainable financial footing going forward. I appreciate your comments.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. I can't see where we are going to gain money on this. Traditionally, 12 people retire from this District each year. That has not been the case during COVID, I agree. If 12 people retire each year, and we are running it for 2 years, 24 people would have retired anyway. So, we are running this program for 6 people. We are paying 6 people to decide that they want to leave for \$15,000. I don't see that as a winning situation. I really don't like the way in which this proposal was constructed. We do have a negotiating committee. That committee did not construct this. I understand from talking with teachers that their executive committee did participate in it entirely, but why the negotiating committee for the administrative staff was not represented, I don't understand. I think there are some other ideas that could have been presented by putting it out to the entire committee and I think we would have been better off that way. If these teachers put the money into TRS, they will have to come up with 14% of that on their own, and I hope they realize that. When a teacher retires, what they really want is protection for their life and for retirement, and that rolls back to their health insurance. I think we must consider putting health insurance in as an incentive for retirement. That's what they need. That's what they want. \$15,000 isn't going to carry them. An idea would be to offer them 25% of their health insurance costs monthly. That would have been much more valuable, and I think it would have hurt us less fiscally in the District to do that. I think that we have an obligation and a commitment to these people who have served their entire adult career and our schools. I don't like this, but I will vote for it, only because of one thing. I understand this is one-time money, we can not put it into a salary schedule, and we can not carry this money over. That is the only reason I will vote for it.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Ms. Mickelson is there anything you can add in terms of what the overall impact and benefit you think this would bring to the District.

Ms. Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator, commented. I can speak to next year. It would cost us roughly 2.7 million, but of that 2.7 million I would say that about 45% of it is termination pay that we are already liable for at some point in time. That liability would continue to grow if we didn't offer this, and those teachers remain with us. Out of that 2.7 million, 45% of that is termination pay and 55% is this incentive. The costs include salaries and associated employer payroll costs. So, the cost of the general fund would be approximately \$700,070 in the elementary and about \$535,000 in the high school general fund. The other costs will go into the retirement fund. The savings is approximately 1 million dollars based on a replacement teacher of \$46,000, which is 5 years on the matrix. That savings would be in the initial year. Savings to the elementary general fund would be about \$590,000 and about \$380,000 in the high school general fund. That savings will reduce over time as these teachers grow in step.

Trustee John McEwen commented. Mr. Chair I am not a fan of this for many of the same reasons that Trustee Beaver stated. In the current collective bargaining contract, there is a \$9,000 retirement incentive for people who have been here for 20 years or more, so the \$15,000 would be on top of that. My concerns are teacher shortages, so why are doing this in a tight labor market? Since we did this a few years ago, I'm afraid we are creating an expectation and that every two to three years employees will expect this sort of thing. I'm fairly certain I am going to vote no.

Ms. Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair commented. Ms. Collete, are finding that there is a shortage of applicants for our openings?

Ms. Collette commented. What I'm finding is our pay schedule for our teachers is very competitive in our labor market. We have a pool of elementary educators in the system ready to go. Our positions that are hard to fill are consumer science, physical therapists, and occupational therapists and those are hard to fill in any district across the state. We will struggle to fill those types of vacancies. People are attracted to come to Montana, they have moved mid-season, and they have moved to our community where they can raise their children in a smaller environment. I believe we are in a prime position to attract talent to fill those positions that we choose to fill.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. I appreciated the discussion. I think it was a good point stated that we don't want to incentivize people who may be doing something anyway. That is why I asked the question to Janelle, is there a benefit to us of knowing when this will happen as opposed to having less predictability over when these folks might retire. That helps me grapple with that question. To Trustee McEwen's question, are we setting a precedent here that we will need to run a retirement incentive every three years in order to make sure that we don't have too many folks on one side of the pay matrix?

What gives me hope that we are equalizing this is the very fact that we have a new pay matrix now as a result of the collective bargaining that we concluded last year. That coupled with the fact that we cannot give folks more than 6 years of service credit when hiring them on. Those are open questions. Am I completely satisfied with those concerns? I am not, but it ultimately gets me pretty close. At the end of the day, we had a proposal from HEA, it was bargained in good faith, I appreciate the work that went into that. My Business Administrator and Clerk is telling me that she feels it's going to pay off for us financially over the course of the next few years. I think that gets me where I need to be to support this.

Trustee McKee commented. I'm going to vote in favor of it but when we talk about people at the high end of the pay scale, I want to make it clear that they earned that money, and I'm proud that people have stayed that long because this is a good place to work, and they are doing good work. I see this as an incentive and a way to bring a small amount of predictability to a budget that we ultimately do have to balance, but behind all those numbers are people who have done good work for our community and for our kids. I'll support incentivizing retirement, but I absolutely respect the work that went into how they got to the top end of the pay scale.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Is there a motion on the floor regarding this action item?

Motion: Trustee Terry Beaver moved to approve the HEA Teacher Retirement Incentive as presented. Siobhan Hathorn, Vice Chair, seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-1 The motion carried; Trustee John McEwen voted against.

VIII. BOARD COMMENTS

There were no further Board comments.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.